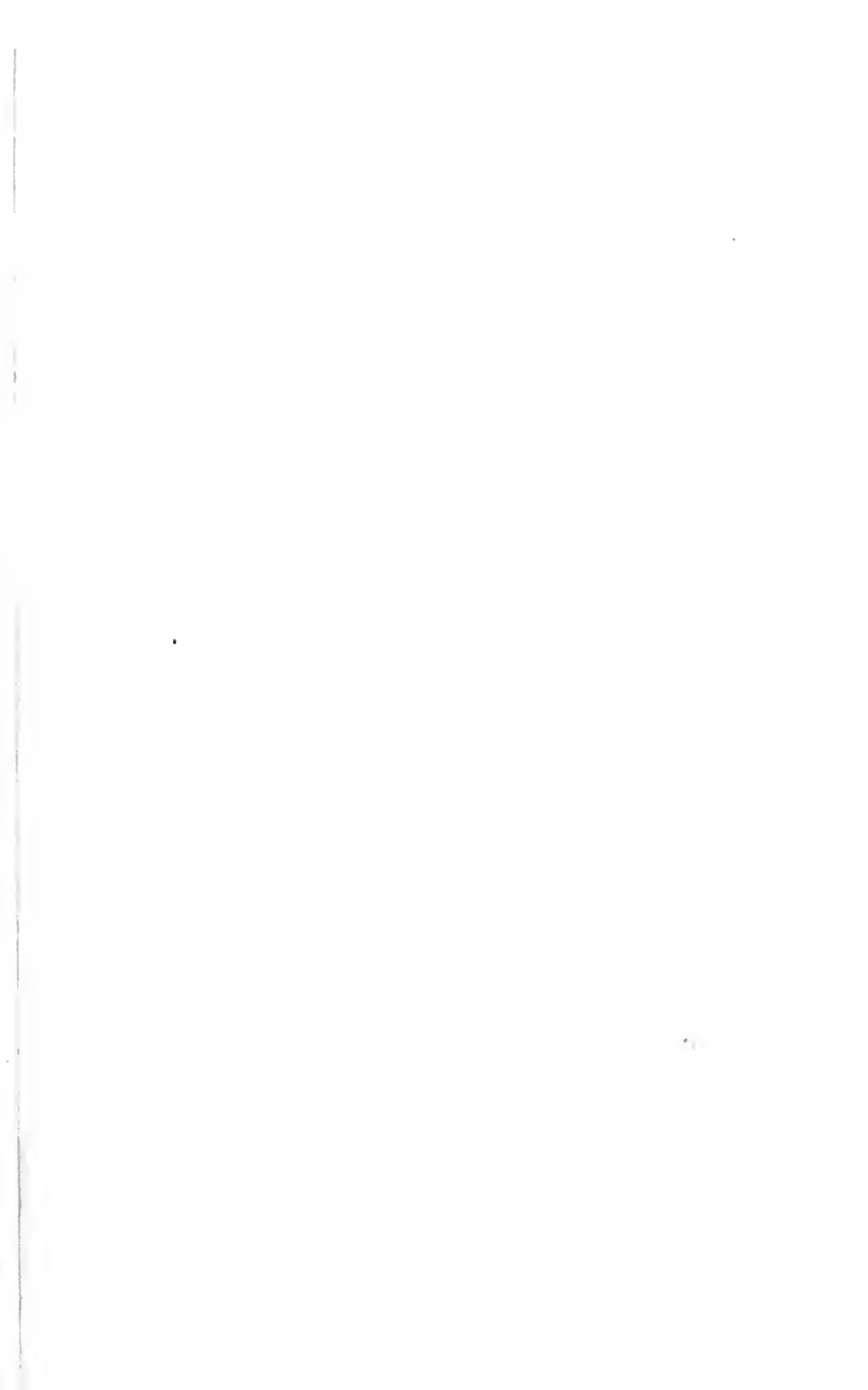


ANTHONY OVERMAN



MIRIAM
MICHELSON





ANTHONY OVERMAN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR :

“ In the Bishop's Carriage ”

“ The Madigans ”

“ The Yellow Journalist ”



JESSIE INCELL

"She caught his eye and held it defiantly"

See page 188

Anthony Overman

BY

MIRIAM MICHELSON

Author of "In the Bishop's Carriage," Etc.

Illustrated by John Cecil Clay



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PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

ANTHONY OVERMAN, who is variously described herein as "One of the obscure Christs."
"Just a Crank." "Only a theory-box."

JESSIE INCELL, a newspaper woman, "who walked into people's holy of holies or most grisly skeletoned closet with clicking heels and a cheerful unconsciousness of her un-human lack of both." This was her own judgment, delivered half-humorously, half-pathetically in after years. But a man who worked with her declared she was "a woman with a man's tolerance and a clear, big brain, and the sweetest, most spirited, jolliest face in the world."

DEAN MORGAN, "An average man," he once said of himself, "not a bit better than other men, and not so sure besides that other men are very bad."

WILL DONAGHEY, A Renunciant first; later a Protestant.

HILMA HULSBURG, simple, sincere, loving; essentially feminine.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS—*Continued*

THE MINOR CHARACTERS include a labor leader, a minister of the gospel, a successful physician, a young violinist, a woman newspaper artist, a landlady unsoured by experience, etc., etc.

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ANTHONY OVERMAN



ANTHONY OVERMAN

CHAPTER I

ONCE this road, along which the girl strolled, was a wandering path, trodden out through the thick manzanita by a thirsty grizzly on his way from the Sierras down to the river.

Later the miners, surging up through the gulches and canyons, found the uncertain trail, and their restless feet beat it into a topographical fact.

By the time the primitive poetry of straining gold out of water had yielded to the more profitable prose of hydraulic mining, the little gap through the chaparral and over the ridge had been emphasized till it was recognized as a roadway; and the manzanita, and her big sister the madrone, withdrawing their skirts from under the careless feet that trampled upon them, had retreated up the hillsides, where they could look down upon the bare, ever-widening parting in the forest over which horses were driven now, and the wheels of wagons heavily loaded ground out the humbler growth which, through its obscurity, had persisted.

Then the general name with which the pass had been indicated became specific and capitalized and Little Gap grew into a town; a most un-

assuming California village straggling contentedly on either side of, or rather punctuating at intervals, the road that had created it—the road which, although it now ends ingloriously at the crudely ugly railroad station, irresistibly leads the eye up, up to the summit of the Sierras.

And there is a breeziness, a spaciousness, an undefiled ecstasy of purity about the High Sierras. Nature, yet untainted by man, has expressed herself largely in mighty pine-clad, snow-topped blue mountains and rolling stretches of foot-hills; in rivers whose clarity is as perfect as the first snow-formed drops that heralded them; and a sky of chaste and limpid blue, pale as with awe of the celestial wonders it has gazed upon. But there is an effect of simplicity with it all, an omission of sensational landscape contrasts. These Western Alps were conceived in no semi-theatrical, awe-awakening mood, and yet a steadily uplifting consciousness of broadly built beauty, set in a canvas of inspiring height and depth, comes to him who looks for the first time, as this girl Jessie Incell did, upon the almost primeval purity of this still new bit of the world.

Not that Miss Incell was unusually susceptible to the beauty of Nature. She had been too busy since she left school—not so long ago—to become a connoisseur in the works of the Artist who

paints one subject continually yet never twice alike. The world of men and women had far too great an interest for her to permit Nature's still-life to overshadow it. She was possessed of a not unhealthy, wide-awake, good-natured curiosity about other people's affairs. As for her own, she was practical, optimistic and successful, and her profession, which she looked upon as so essential an element of her life that she could not conceive herself apart from it, intensified the very qualities that fitted her for it.

Still the influence of the place and the time—it was twilight—fell upon her. Her work brought her into many queer places and into all sorts of queer people's lives, but it rarely took her away from the city, whose every year of prosperous growth was undoing the work of centuries in which Nature had made it beautiful for man to unbeautify. So Miss Incell walked down the road from the village and off toward the clearing in the forest, with a sense of vacation relaxation that rarely accompanied her in her little journeys of inquiry into other people's business. For her profession required concentration, although her temperament, as well as the keen, ever-renewed interest she felt in each subject that came under her observation, made devotion to the matter on hand a pleasure. But this evening she strolled

along consciously enjoying the free, sweet air that blew down from the mountains, whose snowy caps glittered late in the last rays of the sun, and the fresh coolness of evening, so grateful after her long, hot ride in the train. And yet earth and sky, mountains and forest became negligible and unreal to Miss Incell as the mere background against which life plays itself, when she rounded a turn in the path and came to a small clearing in the forest in which a little log cottage stood, its broken gaping windows and shabby need of repair revealed by the leaping flames of the bonfire, by whose light two men and a woman were unpacking a pitifully small load of household goods.

A trained instinct in the young woman took quick possession of the rude stage-setting. With no conscious recognition of the mental process she had found the words to describe this brave, poor, thriftless little hegira, the supple young Irishman who had unhitched the horse and was leading it to the tumble-down stable behind the house, the fair Swedish woman, evidently his wife, who was standing with sleeves rolled up to the elbow, issuing orders as to the disposal of the furniture, and the bearded giant in overalls, jumper and broad-brimmed straw hat who bent his strong, young back to take upon it the kitchen stove he was to carry into the house.

Jessie Incell stood in the shadow of the great trees watching. Along with a self-gratulatory recognition of her good-fortune in arriving just at a dramatic moment in these people's lives, there came the prudent consciousness that many a good "story" is wrecked because of a faulty approach to the subject of it. Still there was something so primitive, so unsophisticated about this little settlement and the settlers out here in the woods that caution came to appear unnecessary and Miss Incell advanced at length within the circle the fire-light spread upon the grass.

"I beg your pardon, I am looking for Mr. Overman—Mr. Anthony Overman," she said addressing the party as a whole, though she knew quite well which of the two men was the one she sought. "Can you tell me where I might find him?"

Her rather high, self-possessed voice with its cultured girlish lilt fell upon the little group engaged in the earliest, least self-conscious occupation of mankind—homebuilding—and dissolved it into conventional elements. The woman in the doorway stepped back into the house, suddenly aware that she was not prepared to meet a visitor. The young Irishman, following her immediately, threw up a resenting chin at the interruption, feeling that same but belated sense of intrusion that the Indians had when, long ago, the gold-seekers came

to build this little house by the American river, whose upper tributaries were once so treasure-laden. The big young man, who had now deposited the stove inside the house, straightened his back, as he walked down the few wooden steps, loosened the handkerchief knotted about his perspiring throat, took off his hat as he advanced to meet her and said:

"I am Anthony Overman."

"How fortunate I am to find you," she said, sparring verbally for time to study him before she should disclose her errand. "They told me at the hotel that you would probably be very busy to-day."

"I've been going about trying to get the loan of a horse so that Donaghey and Hilma could get into the place before night. You see everything's upset, I can't ask you in. But won't you sit down?" He pointed to the low, broad stump of a tree.

Miss Incell had the genius for adapting herself to circumstances which made life both easy and pleasant to her, and she sat down now on the rooted stool, her attitude showing so comfortable a disregard for inconveniences that Overman, relieved as to the disposition of a young lady visitor whom he had never before seen or spoken to, leaned his shoulder against the nearest oak and stood attentively looking down upon her.

"I wonder, Mr. Overman," she said looking up with a most fetching air of innocent interest, "whether you would give me some information about a peculiar sect up here called The Renunciants? I've just come up from San Francisco this afternoon and at the hotel they suggested my coming to you."

"What do you want to know?"

"Why—" His simplicity disarmed her, so that the directness of the question was almost disconcerting, but she went on cheerily. "Why, everything you will tell me. I've heard, you know, of the trouble up here and——"

"You mean about the community's breaking up?"

"Yes," she assented encouragingly.

"Well, there isn't much to tell. A number of men and women—I am—I was one of them—have come to California from all parts of the country to live as a community in what we have called the City of Peace. There is nothing remarkable about any of us, nor anything very new about the experiment. We simply thought that out here we could establish a colony on the lines that Renunciants believe in, and live a life of purity, industry and peace. Brother Ariel—Mr. Senn . . . You have seen Mr. Senn?"

"No. I wanted to. But he is out of town."

"At Auburn. He'll be back tomorrow very likely. Senn can tell you more than I and of course no one can form an opinion, a just opinion, without hearing his side. Our side is just this: we looked upon Senn as part apostle, part father, part manager of us. He had charge of our business and was the leader in our spiritual aspirations. We found him to be dishonest in the management of our affairs. We learned that he was evading the obligations of religion—our religion which he had founded—and was leading a life of such immorality, even according to worldly standards, as to bring scandal upon us and expose innocent women connected with us to shocking misinterpretation."

"Scandal?" She leaned far forward; this was what she had come to hear. "Tell me was there anything really immoral about Mr. Senn's life up yonder at the Home on the Hill with Sister Berenice and Sister Beulah and the rest?"

He looked down upon her a moment without answering.

"I'd rather not discuss such things with you," he said slowly.

In the dusk her face flamed red. She had never been struck across the cheek, but she could understand now how one's face might tingle after

such a blow. But by profession, as well as temperament, she was a good fighter. She promptly struck back.

"I thought you Renunciants believed that impurity can exist only where the intention is impure," she said maliciously.

"You are not one of us," he answered unmoved, and his lack of resentment, his forbearance made her feel that perhaps there had not been the sting of design in his impugnement of her taste. "And your tone shows that you have no respect for what we believe—believed—no, *believe*."

In her surprise she dropped a pencil with which she had been taking sketch notes on a paper pad, forgetting personal griefs in professional interest in this peculiar type.

"Believe!" she exclaimed. "Still? . . . Still?"

"Yes, still." He shifted his body but he met her gaze. "Because Senn has proven a false prophet, the religion he preached is not necessarily false. My belief in the possibility of an ideal community life is not shaken by the fact that this one, under Senn's guidance, has come to grief."

"You *are* optimistic," she sneered still unforgiving. "And yet Senn is a drunkard?"

"Yes."

“And a thief?”

He did not reply.

“And a libertine?”

“It is all true.”

“But it does not affect your belief in the cult he preached—established—of which he is the author?”

“May I ask,” suddenly he bent forward looking at her intently, “may I ask why you want to know all this?”

She laughed within herself at the long-delayed question. But she answered with a pretense of surprise, an affected innocent unconsciousness of its appositeness that was disproportionately artful, so simple he seemed.

“Why certainly. I thought you knew. I am Miss Incell, Jessie Incell of the *Inquirer*, and the office has sent me up here to get to the bottom of this Renunciants scandal.”

She watched the effect on him amusedly. Her name, familiar to newspaper readers throughout the West, evidently made no impression out here under the great oaks and pine. Evidently this man had not heard it before. But he realized that he had answered frankly every question she had put, not knowing what use she intended to make of what he said, and he turned away from her with a child-like movement, as though phys-

ically to put her out of his horizon while he adjusted his mind to the new situation.

As for her, she had all the material she needed. She sat now looking at him; first because of her unquenchable interest in human nature, making a study of this particular specimen for her own gratification, and second because the evening was beautifully balmy, and it was delightful, to one who had spent her days in the close rush of city life, to be out here in the solitude of the still forest beneath the great black trees.

"Well," he said at last turning again to her, "it doesn't make any difference. I don't remember exactly what I've said to you, and I don't care to get into the papers, but I haven't said anything that isn't true."

"I'm sure that you needn't regret anything you've said. And I'm really very much obliged to you. I wanted, not so much facts from you as—as atmosphere," she said skilfully. "Something, you know, that would give me a line on Renunciants in general, that might make me comprehend the kind of people who could go into this sort of thing, make me sympathize with them, you understand."

He put his arms behind him now and looked smiling down upon her.

"You wanted to try to get inside the head of a crank, is that it?" he asked.

She looked up, a sweet swift, insincere denial on her lips. But the simple candor of his face and his words had its effect upon a nature to which formality was irksome.

"Exactly," she said relieved.

He threw back his head then and laughed aloud, and she laughed with him. And after this she dropped the character she had assumed as a disguise to her journalistic designs and yielded to her curiosity without attempt at dissimulation.

"Do tell me," she asked, leaning forward, her hands loosely clasped about her knees, "how a man like you came to join a humbug like Senn."

"Does it strike you as so very odd," he demanded gravely, "that a fellow should have an ideal and turn his back on conventional ideas for the sake of it?"

"It does—very much so."

"And you don't believe in enthusiasms," he went on questioning in his turn, "in self-sacrifice, in betterment of the world by means of——"

"Of high thinking and low living on the Senn plan," she interrupted.

He stood a moment silently looking down upon her.

"I think," he said slowly after a moment, "that



ANTHONY OVERMAN

" 'Does it strike you as so very odd,' he demanded gravely, 'that a fellow should have an ideal and turn his back on conventional ideas for the sake of it?' "

you either are not quite honest or not quite capable of appreciating this question. It is very easy to speak cynically; although, to be frank with you, I cannot conceive of a young mind without aspirations, nor can I find anything in common with it."

She smiled to herself in the fast-gathering dusk. Evidently, she said to herself, she was being disapproved of.

"Why don't you convert me?" she asked gaily.

"I doubt," he said severely, "I doubt my power. But more than this I distrust the shallows of a flippant nature."

She laughed aloud in sudden, honest enjoyment. It was a good laugh to hear, girlish and hearty, with a chuckle of amusement running beneath it that gave it a boyish quality.

"Then I'm not worth converting, not even so much so as—the lady in yonder?" she mocked, nodding toward the cabin before her.

"Hilma Hulsberg is an ignorant Swedish girl," he answered with grave rebuke. "You would find her English very diverting, I've no doubt, but she is capable of sincere and honest faith and trust."

"In Senn?"

"In the things she thought Senn represented, in the things she still believes exist though Senn is—all you said he is."

"Then will you explain to me," she said with

a sexless impersonality in discussing sex problems which was not assumed, "how she can be a wife and a Renunciant, too? Marriage is forbidden by an article in your faith, isn't it?"

"Hilma and Donaghey married, according to the law of the State," he said coldly, "to avert scandalous misinterpretation from just such people as—as——"

"Myself, you were going to say," she concluded saucily.

"But they are not man and wife," he added. "Oh!"

The scornful intonation did not anger him, as she had hoped it would, but it seemed to arouse his combativeness.

"Look here, I don't know you at all and you don't know me, and we are not likely ever to see each other again. You think me a crank and a fool for having been taken in. But I tell you it's no harder for you to realize that a man can be what I am than it is for me to understand how a girl can be like—you—if you're sincere. Don't you believe in anything?"

"Not in miracles," she answered, roused herself now. "I know something of human nature and I know it isn't going to be changed by building a community house on the top of a hill and calling it the Home of Peace; by isolating oneself in small

stone houses to 'meditate'; by starving one's body of meat and living on grain and guff; trying, in short, to lift oneself by his mental and moral boot-straps, while gravity in the shape of sinful human nature forever pulls one down. You see how it has worked with your New Jerusalem. You are all scattered, bankrupt. A pious old fraud has sucked you dry. And you're not the first lot he has wrecked. I don't think your gullibility a great tribute to common sense."

She was playing on him now, on his patience, on his sincerity—if he was really sincere; she wasn't yet sure of this.

"You're right—that far," he said without a shade of resentment. "But it may be a tribute to something more precious than common sense. I am older than you and I've made a fool of myself. I have worked since I was a child and all that I had in the world this man Senn has got. I am, as you say, sucked dry, and can get nothing back. And I see the pitiful contemptible figure we cut in your eyes—Donaghey, poor Hilma and myself, shipwrecked, stranded out here in the forest with scarcely enough to eat. But I swear to you I'd go into another thing again that promised what this did. And I'd rather be a fool and a crank a hundred times over than be destitute of hope for humanity, than be content with the

best the world has succeeded so far in making of life."

"You would! You would?" she cried incredulously.

"I was looking for my ideal," he went on, as though only half conscious of the interruption, "when I heard of the Renunciants, and I thought I had found it. When I think again that there is hope of my ideal being realized I'll try again—and again."

She looked up at him curiously. The bonfire had burned down and he stood in the dusk, his back against a tree, his arms crossed easily behind his muscular back, his short-bearded chin thrust aggressively forward, a striking figure in the loose garments he wore, having a strength and a grace that were faun-like—the unworldliness of his sentiments harmonizing effectively, it seemed to her, with himself and his surroundings. The artistic instinct in her was stirred by the picturesqueness of the situation.

"Do you care to tell me," she asked puzzled, "just what practical result you hoped to accomplish?"

He threw out his hands.

"Does it seem ridiculous to you," he demanded passionately, "that by self-denial and bodily and mental discipline, by hard work and simple living

that one may make a better man of himself—one who had been a wild young chap without home or friends? And after he had mastered himself and read and studied, would it be so strange if he could influence and strengthen others of his kind? People who live close-packed in the world—even girls like you—become cynical and selfish and low-aimed. Is it so absurd that by setting one's life in great spaces, by being always face to face with grandeur and beauty like this"—He threw out a hand toward the Sierras snow-crested and the rushing river nearly a half mile below them—"and having before one psychically the example, the altruism of fine souls, living and dead, and their printed words to add to the delight of study—is it strange that the satisfaction of self-mastery and an unquenchable yearning to make the world a better place to live in should follow? Is it all a mere fad of vegetarianism to you, a bit of mysticism, and a queer playing with dangerous instincts—our conviction that imperfect creatures should refrain from giving birth to others as imperfect? Is that all it looks to you? Is it possible?"

She looked at him in silence as he stood between her and the roughly built old cottage, through whose weather-beaten sides the light within now shone. And her eyes wandered from the speaking poverty of his clothes to the dirt and disorder of the

hasty squatter settlement. Then she shook herself, as though waking from a wistful dream, and rose suddenly.

"You have been very kind," she said holding out a hand with a boyish sort of grace. "I don't understand it nor you, but thank you. I really forgot that I was interviewing."

"So did I," he said shortly. "It's dark. You won't be able to see the road. Wait a minute till I light a lantern and walk with you up to the hotel."

"I didn't know it was so late," she began vexed. "But I'm not afraid. You needn't bother, thanks, I'm quite accustomed to going about alone."

"In the city, perhaps. It isn't safe here."

He left her and came back with the lantern—the first she had ever used—and they walked in silence, save for his directions to avoid this obstruction or that on the dark road, toward the village.

Miss Incell was glad he did not speak. A hidden strain of sentiment in her responded to the novelty of the walk. The sweet scents of the country after nightfall, the dim black presence of the forest, the solemn rushing of the river, and the consciousness of the watching heights of the Sierras up among the stars struck a chord in her that seldom vibrated.

But by the time she had reached her room in the primitive little hotel and got out her paper and pencils, she recognized this mood only for the literary value it might have in making her "story" picturesque. She wrote for two hours, and then went over to the telegraph office to send her account and the following message:

"Dean W. Morgan, Acting City Editor. Am sending 2000 words Renunciant story. Sketches by mail. Will see Senn to-morrow for follow story. Home to-morrow night. Jessie Incell."

Miss Incell went back to her room, ordered a light supper sent up to her, undressed and went to bed, and was sound asleep before Morgan, acting city editor, had filed his return message, congratulating her on the journalistic feat she had accomplished to the glory of the *Inquirer* and the confusion of its rivals.

CHAPTER II

IT'S a caprice of Nature's to leave behind her the key to the cipher in which she writes. In the shaping of the highest form of rudimentary life to-day she unfolds to the wise and watchful the whole history of development. And in the lifting of the haze from the Sierras in the early morning after Jessie Incell had exposed the Community of Renunciants, she lifted the same veil that hung over the world when it was virgin the morning that Creation set peaks to soaring, rivers to rushing, trees to waving sentient green arms of gladness, and earth to sloping down to flower-bordered turf and meadows.

The recreation charmed Miss Incell. She was standing beside her wheel on the hill whose summit was topped by the deserted, though yet unfinished, brick home of the Fraternity. The site is a marvelously beautiful one and Miss Incell looked across from it to the very tip of the Sierras, deep blue now with the haze of distant forest fires, and down to the pines and redwoods from which the smoke of the arriving train rose in fair white clouds, and smiled to herself in sheer content. On that train were bundles and bundles of morning papers; chief among them the *Inquirer* which was presently to explode its bomb of publicity,

manufactured by her own hands, upon the unsuspecting town. And knowing this, she had ordered an early breakfast, hired a wheel, ridden up to the Home of Peace and secured her interview with the leader of the Fraternity, before he could learn in what terms she had already written about him and the flock of idealists and simpletons he had shorn and scandalized.

She had got a good interview—which meant to her an unconscious self-revelation of its subject which, interpreted with a spice of malice, some humor and cleverness, would expose the farce played up here among the everlasting hills and make good reading apart from its interest as a newsy, human story. So this newspaperwoman had a delicious sense of having won in a game she had played single-handed; her wit and newspaper experience and professional privileges pitted against the combined suspicion and antagonism of the religio-economic community, its natural distaste for publicity, and the real weakness and depravity it had to hide.

Miss Incell chuckled aloud as she mounted her wheel, looking back for a moment to the patriarchal saint and swindler who stood in the doorway of the Home, beaming benevolently down upon her in the belief—skilfully fostered by her while she had listened to him—that he had com-

pletely put his inquisitor off the track and incidentally made a pleasant personal impression upon her; a not unusual experience of his among women.

But this particular woman rode slowly along the driveway, taking mental notes of Brother Abraham at the milking, Brother Daniel chasing an unruly cow, seized also with the contagion of rebellion, Brother Harvey and Brother Justin working among the olive trees, while Sister Berenice clattered tins in the kitchen and Sister Beulah stopped washing windows to peer through them after the girl, whose irreverence and cynicism she suspected, with the intuitive distrust of her sex.

Jessie Incell herself had a delightful sense of being a sort of journalistic Puck to whom hidden things are visible. She saw behind the apparent idyl the seamy shame of selfish purpose; and a non-human spirit of mischief which, according to her philosophy, was the recompense and accompaniment of being a spectator, made her gloat over this satire on human optimism and idealism.

The spokes of her wheel flew faster as she turned down the hill, and the introduction to her character study of Senn began to weave itself in her alert and practised mind. The sensational journal that employed her believed that a clever newspaper woman may be more than a mere

reportorial retina, and Miss Incell consequently wrote with what coloring of wit or satire of sentiment best pleased her and suited her story. Fragments of description, apt, characterizing adjectives, satirical short comments in parenthetical expression, together with a scheme for the material presentation of the article, the make-up of type and sketches into an attractive first page, began to take shape in her busy brain. She had reached the top of a bit of smooth road on the down grade. The morning air was sweetly, purely invigorating. She was alone to enjoy it, young, buoyantly healthy and full of self-content. Yielding to an athletic pleasure in exercise, which she could not often indulge, she took her feet from the pedals and coasted down the hill. The sensation was glorious, she felt as though she were flying through the morning up here above the black-green tops of the pines. She rode skilfully, her eye was steady and clear and her seat firm. But what she could not take into consideration was the potential frailties of a bicycle hired in a small county town, where the pleasures of wheeling were rarely indulged in and the use of the bicycle as a two-wheeled horse had not occurred to a primitive population.

Miss Incell's lithe little body had become so thoroughly a partner in the rapid motion that she

did not receive the full force of the shock when the tire burst. But she flew over the handle bars with a conviction, humorous as it was instantaneous, that she had not really flown before, and she came to earth with such force that she lost her sense of humor together with the rest of her senses and waked at last, after the first fainting spell she had had in her short, healthy life, to know that something serious had befallen her left ankle.

She sat up, a bit giddy then but thoroughly herself, and looked disgustedly at her boot. The wrecked and abandoned wheel lay also in the line of her vision just beyond, but all her indignation was reserved for the luckless ankle that incapacitated her. She had the perfectly healthy animal's sense of impersonal fury at the unwarranted collapse of a member. She regarded that awkwardly outstretched, throbbing foot with the scornful look that failure merits. She hated it for a coward and a weakling. It was her nature, as well as the ethics of her profession, to have no mercy upon the one who has "fallen down." The detail of carrying her safely through her enterprise had been partly entrusted to that same stupid foot, as she denominated it; and for no reason, some reason, any reason—the terms were synonymous in her vocabulary—the foot had failed. She

would have cut it off and thrown it from her if she could, without a qualm. She had no sense of kinship with failures. She knew no excuse for not doing not only what is expected of one, but even more than could be anticipated. She had a feeling of alienation from the unfit member and she regarded it with contempt and steady disapproval till, perhaps in revenge, it began to smart and burn so that her hot hate was quenched in tears.

She smiled ruefully through a mist, wiped her eyes, and unlaced her high boot. This relieved her and she leaned back against a madrone to think the thing out. After all it wasn't so bad. She had the whole day before her. Presently someone, driving along the road, would help her into town. She would have a doctor look at her ankle and patch it up temporarily. Then she would do her writing, be driven to the train, and reach San Francisco early next morning if not late that night. Though she planned it all successfully she did not look upon that rascal foot of hers with any less severity. It was not the foot's fault that she had not been crippled and her whole story spoiled. It was only her own quick capacity of adjustment to circumstances, upon which she prided herself, and her forehandedness in getting up so early that had saved the day.

This train of thought led her straight to her reasons for early rising, and her eyes began to twinkle. She took out a paper pad and pencil and penknife and sharpened a new point before she began to touch up her sketch of Senn. She sketched crudely but had a happy knack of getting the tone of a face, its significance, the expression that lay behind the features, and this gift together with her newspaper instinct for striking poses and a faculty of description and mimicry made it easy for a good draughtsman to complete her sketches in the spirit in which they were conceived.

In the illustration which now grew under her hand, Miss Incell had caught the expression of mingled cunning and piety that marks the religious hypocrite. She only indicated the long white flowing beard, the white curls and bald forehead, and with business-like notes in a quick, round hand she described the easy though watchful pose her subject had assumed when, slippered and suspended in his soft silk shirt, this latest of semi-Messiahs, semi-promoters—had sat opposite her, rocking gently as he answered her questions.

The sound of approaching carriage wheels interrupted her contemplation of her work (she was considering it with a critical, loving, malicious smile) and she pulled herself to her only remaining foot that seemed to have a conscience, and gave

tongue to a halloo that was quickly stifled. For it was the subject of her sketch in person who was driving by on his way to town. For just a second, though Jessie Incell had a vision, which nearly convulsed her, of herself riding into town beside the man whom she had made odious in the eyes of his whole little world, which must have already read the *Inquirer's* exposé of him, his methods and morals. The mischievous instinct in her was sorely tempted but another instinct, deeper rooted and more significant of her real self, made contact with the venerable-appearing old satyr abhorrent to her. A peculiar quality in this girl's nature, which had been emphasized by her work, permitted Miss Incell to seek this man out and listen impersonally to his self-revelation of an impure mind and the hypocritical pretense with which he sought to cover it. But the thought of voluntary acquaintance with Senn was loathsome to her, and she dropped back in the shadow of the madrone while he drove by, as unconscious of her presence as he was of the storm of obloquy about to engulf and overthrow him.

The hours were long for the *Inquirer's* star reporter after this. The sun rose high and higher and in all the broad, peaceful landscape from the glittering ice cones of the Sierras to the crimsoned leaf of the poison oak garlanded from tree to tree,

nothing moved. She heard no sound save the distant clang of a cow bell, the deadened rush of the river far off, or the quickly throttled shriek of an engine's whistle as a train plunged up through the mountains or down toward the bay. She had covered every scrap of paper she had with notes and detached bits of the story she meant to write, but irritated at last by the impossibility of getting it into shape on the single small pad she had taken with her, she stuffed all the fragments into her side satchel and with heroic resolution she stood upright, reached for the tough limb of the madrone under which she had fallen, hacked and cut with her small penknife till she had detached it from its gorgeously red trunk and made herself a cane. With this she hobbled forward and downward toward town. And she continued determinedly on her way, long after the burning pain in her wrenched and twisted bones cried out against the jarring her erratic gait necessitated. But she yielded at last when the road began to mount again and, weak from suffering, sank down in a bed of rustling leaves under a straggling oak that had rooted itself in a cup-like dip between two softly rounded, low hills. Her suffering made her forget the unforgivable sin of which her foot had been guilty and, throwing aside her shoe, she nursed the stricken member tenderly, trying to

rub down the inflammation that had swollen it so out of shape that she could not put on the shoe again.

It had grown very warm and the exertion required by her crippled condition had exhausted her. She was a bit nauseated from hunger as well as pain, and she lay back disheartened and almost indifferent to anything but the prospect of lying still. The haze of noon covered the warm earth and the sun beat on the shining white caps on the great mountains as though to dissolve them into one blinding beam of light. Gradually as she lay there, the pain in Miss Incell's ankle seemed to become dulled; the cowbells sounded farther off and came less and less frequently. And presently—so different was the situation from any that she had known, so strangely effective was it in revealing to her another self than the one she recognized and authorized—she began to tell herself how good it is to lie close, close to earth, steeped in sunshine, in heat, in quiet; to forget restlessness and ambition and suffering and happiness; to lose consciousness, to know no sense of responsibility, or of failure, or success, or kinship except to the great, quiet, slumbrous breast of Nature; to feel only—and this with exquisite, permeating keenness—the conviction of one's earthiness, of the nearness of one's absorption into clean, insensitive earth and nothingness.

CHAPTER III

AN HOUR later, Anthony Overman walking along beside the docile old horse he was taking back to its owner, found the metropolitan journalist lying asleep. After an unbelieving start at his odd discovery he recognized her, for the little town could hold but one woman so smartly yet mannishly gowned, so obviously an urban product.

While he stood idly looking down upon her, the patient, spotted white horse cropped the grass on the roadside. Time meant no more to old Graylock, Little Gap's one horse for hire, than it did to the disillusioned Renunciants paralyzed momentarily by the crashing of their world and the necessity of immediately making another.

There was a smile beneath Overman's mustache and the tip of his short, untrimmed beard twitched humorously. In his self-centred earnestness the night before he had not really considered what manner of young woman it was who had fallen down from the skies to question him lightly about the subjects of which he had thought most deeply. But to-day, out here in the broadlight of afternoon, there was something grotesquely idyllic about his discovery, something absurdly at variance in the rather pathetic, helpless, relaxed little figure and the sturdy assertiveness of her cynical, up-to-date

self of the night before. She had taken off her jaunty little hat with its cocked feather, her brown, tumbled head was pillowed on her arm, her cheeks were flushed and her girlish lips apart, and her frank, mocking, boyish eyes were hidden. She looked such a little thing in her short golf skirt, such a child of a woman as she lay there that she appealed to that sense of protectiveness, which is the first sense awakened in man by woman, however the second may differ from it.

But the light of amusement had not yet died out of his eye when she waked. She sat up suddenly, blinking indignantly at a world that had surprised her off guard, catching with characteristic quickness the atmosphere of gentle ridicule with which the lurking smile of the one spectator enwrapped her, and resenting it.

She sprang to her feet, forgetting that one of them was no longer fit for service.

"Ouch!" she cried and sank back sick with pain.

"You are hurt—I thought you were asleep," Overman cried dropping down beside her.

She looked up then recognizing his voice.

"Oh, it's—it's—I remember your name," she groaned, "but I can't think of anything but the smashed bones in this ankle of mine. Plague it, it hurts me so!"

He looked down upon the swollen stockinged foot she was trying to hide under her short skirt.

"That must be painful," he said sympathetically, and in her weakness his tone brought tears to her eyes. "You must let me help you. I'll carry you out to the road and put you on old Graylock and then we'll travel back to town to get the doctor."

"Thank you," she said hesitatingly, with an almost imperceptible gesture checking the move he made toward carrying out his words. "I can walk—or rather hobble a few steps if you'll hand me the madrone crutch yonder that I cut."

But he did not obey her, he got to his feet and stood looking resentfully down upon her.

"Who would have thought a girl like you could be a prude!" he said critically.

"I'm not a prude. But I—hate a man to touch me," she flashed back at him, in her haste to repel the insinuation, saying more than she wished to say. And repenting both her refusal of assistance and the reason she had inadvertently given, she added, "Oh, I know how silly I am and, if you'll pardon me, I'll be very grateful for your help, Mr. Overman."

He did not answer but took her in his arms in a business-like way, as though she were merely a bundle and so small a one as not to require much

attention. He set her on the horse, turned the animal's benevolent, long white face toward town and was starting off when she cried, "I must have my hat, please, and my shoe."

He brought them to her, one in either hand, as she sat perched uneasily upon the mild, old beast whose neck she feared to slide down, as he innocently cropped the grass. And the incongruity of her modish, feminine apparel contrasted with the straight lines of this man's primitively simple dress brought the light of a laugh to her eye.

"A woman never knows how funny she and her belongings are," she said, "till she looks at both from a man's point of view. Aren't we complicating things, we women? How in the world did you get the feminine side of the Fraternity to put aside gewgaws and do the simplicity business?"

"They were mainly poor women, you know," he answered, turning the horse's head down hill, "with not many gewgaws to put aside."

"I know, but a half-naked beggar will fish a dirty ribbon out of an ash-barrel to ornament himself, if he happens to be a she. And really I can sympathize with her. Men can go back to simplicity and not have their ugliness jump to the eyes, if they have only the usual number of legs and arms and the ordinary arrangement of feat-

ures. But we women are such striking guys without our little first aids to the ugly. . . Oh, Mr.—Mr. Overman, my ankle hurts me so I shall scream if I have to let my foot hang down any longer!”

He looked into her face—he was very tall and her tearful, angry eyes as she sat upon Graylock’s slippery back were almost on a level with his.

“Why in the world,” he demanded with some perplexity, “didn’t you say so before?”

“Because,” she answered impatiently, “naturally I hoped by talking a lot of nonsense fast I could forget it, of course.”

He lifted her then and set her down again in side-saddle fashion, with the injured foot lying across her knee. And she rode on in silence till they came to the top of the declivity that becomes the main street of the village farther down. Then he put his arm about her, walking close beside old Graylock, and she thanked him humbly and leaned more and more upon the support his lean strength gave.

As he noticed her growing pallor and the lines of pain about her lips, he tried to divert her by telling her of the humorous side of community life. He concluded with the story of the wealthy widow from Boston who came three thousand miles to join the colony; who subscribed to all the rules and agreed to hand over all her property to

Messiah Senn and never to appeal to the courts to recover it, and yet revolted when it came to sacrificing the black bead chain she wore about her scrawny neck.

But Miss Incell could scarcely listen and the corners of her mouth twitched with agony, though she was biting her lip with determination not to cry out.

He carried her half-fainting into the little house in the clearing when they reached it. She had insisted till then that she must be taken up to the village to her hotel, but she looked up at him gratefully when he deposited her on a chintz-covered lounge in the Swedish woman's half-naked parlor, before she closed her lids from which the slow tears of agony were forcing their way down her cheeks.

Overman brought the one village surgeon back to see her. He was an irregular practitioner, graduate of no school, a nervous, bilious little bald-headed man, delighted with the publicity to be gained by attending a patient whose name was so well known. But he was not conscienceless and after cutting away her stocking and setting the misplaced bones as well as he could, he advised Miss Incell to notify her family and her own physician.

"You take it for granted that no well-regulated

female is without both," she exclaimed pulling herself upright to face him. Two red spots of pain and fever glowed in her cheeks. "Well, I haven't either. But it doesn't make any difference so far as this beastly little ankle of mine is concerned, for I'm going back on to-night's train, the 10:15. But before that, if you'll leave something for me to pour on this nasty egotistical foot of mine to keep it from throbbing itself to the centre of the stage, I'll do some work I've got to do."

"My dear young lady!"

The doctor shook his head, demurred, admired and assented all in one breath, but compromised finally by leaving a prescription and the assurance that he would call again at dusk.

Overman went with him up to the village and came back with the prescription filled. The Swedish girl had removed Miss Incell's jacket, piled some pillows behind her and thrown a coverlet over the injured foot, and had served her tea in a cup so heavy that the nervous girl's hand shook as she held it to her lips.

She put the cup and the tray from her and held out her hand as Overman entered, taking not the medicine but his long, rough hand cordially in both of hers.

"I'm a test of your altruism," she cried gaily. "You are so good to me. Who would have

thought when I was pestering you with questions last night that you'd have me on your conscience to-day, too?"

"We don't mind—do we, Hilma?" he said turning with a smile toward the Swedish girl, "if Miss Incell will put up with this rough place."

"That is what I to her have been saying," said Hilma in the softest shattered English.

"Put up with it!" repeated Miss Incell reproachfully. "You make me ashamed. I know how greatly I must inconvenience you people, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Hilma," said the girl simply.

"Mrs. Hilma then. But please don't let me be a greater nuisance than is absolutely necessary," she concluded as she took the package of paper and the lotion which Overman had brought.

"Hadn't you better let your work go," he suggested diffidently, "and let me telegraph to your paper?"

"Not much!" she answered promptly. "I've got an awfully good story and it's got to go. I'll cut it short, though, and get it done, for that foot of mine will make me dance before long."

So Overman left her and the Swedish girl placed the lap-board she used for sewing over Miss Incell's knees, tiptoeing then from the room.

For a couple of hours after that Jessie Incell wrote steadily, stopping only now and then to pour some of the soothing liniment on her bandaged foot. But when Overman came into the room at dusk, she was lying back exhausted, grinding her teeth with pain. He took the bundle of paper from her, listened attentively to her instructions, which he carried out at the telegraph office before he sought the village doctor.

Doctor Purcey's headquarters were in the grocery store (which was all the saloon the town could boast) and here he was holding forth to an interested audience on the subject of Jessie Incell and the accident she had met with. As he talked the farmers looked from the sensational printed page in their hands with her name in inch-long black capitals at its top, to the doctor's eager face, and their wondering admiration for the first seemed to shed some lustre on the second. In spite of this, Doctor Purcey accompanied Overman to the cottage in the clearing and found, to his alarm, that his distinguished patient was hot with fever and writhing in pain. Miss Incell sent Overman from the room.

"I don't mind squealing before the doctor," she said with stern facetiousness. "It's his business to see people squirm, but it shames me to make a baby of myself before you, and Lord

knows just now I feel like being the biggest baby a coward girl can be."

But when her foot had been rebandaged and the pain was quieted, she called for Hilma.

"I want a carriage," she said, "to take me to the station. And if you'll come down to the city with me—Oh, do come as my guest," she added as the Swedish girl shook her head timidly, "and like the good Samaritan you are, help me to get home. I never can be thankful enough to you for your care, you nice little Mrs. Hilma. Say, can't you come down with me? These men of yours seem pretty well able to take care of themselves. I'll show you the town as soon as I'm well enough and it'll be rather a lark for us both. I wish you'd come."

The Swedish girl looked dazedly from his patient to the doctor, seeking words of caution, deprecation and gratitude.

"No, no, my dear young lady," interposed Doctor Purcey, shutting his rusty black surgical case with extreme care. "Be reasonable and stay if only——"

"I can't—I won't!"

"You—but you must, my dear young lady. To be frank, I fear serious complications and with your permission will telegraph to the city, for your physician, or some specialist. I dare not

let you move even to the hotel. You simply cannot leave till some higher authority than mine permits it. Now, if Baumfelder could see you." The little village doctor had cherished a hope all his life that some miracle might bring him into professional contact with the great city surgeon. "But till he does—no, I assure you, Miss Incell, you can't go. It might cripple you for life."

"Oh—damn!" sobbed Miss Incell turning her face to the wall.

Which eloquent comment and its every attendant circumstance, Doctor Purcey related in detail at the grocery, to the edification of all Little Gap.

CHAPTER IV

IN ALL her life which, though not very long, had been one of varied experiences, Jessie Incell had never known a sleepless night of pain. She waked, after the last of a series of half-delirious nightmares in which the occurrences of the past two days played a distorted part, (the demon of bad dreams having bewitched even her consciousness of success into black, hopeless failure) to hardly recognize herself in the weak, half-hysterical woman who welcomed the Swedish girl's solicitude with a passionate gratitude, as disproportionate as was her sense of forlornness and discomfort.

And this feeling was intensified—though she was hardly conscious of it—by her disappointment when she learned that Overman, who had found work on a neighboring farm, had left the cottage with Donaghey before her waking. She wanted to talk of herself, to analyze aloud the sensations that surprised and interested her. She wanted to ridicule, before a sympathetic and intelligently appreciative listener, the childish lack of proportion with which even a short illness affects one's point of view. And she preferred Overman to be that listener, for a certain largeness and steadiness of poise in him soothed and rested her.

Conversation with the Swedish girl was out of the question. She waited upon her guest with a careful, almost-childish humility. Clearly she regarded Miss Incell as a quite wonderful being of altogether another sphere than her own, of an audacious third sort of sex that was privileged and peculiar, and her slow, sweet imperfect English became unintelligible in her confusion when any topic but the simplest, and most pertinent was broached.

In despair then Miss Incell called for the papers. She had never been without the news two days in succession since she became a journalist. But in despair which shamed her own, Hilma revealed the almost incredible fact that there was not a newspaper in the house.

"Yet Will shall to you one bring when he home comes," Hilma promised softly.

She stepped with a soft lightness that had something birdlike and yet very womanly about it. In the clear blondness of her frank face there shone a deprecating joy, as she moved busily about the bare place, as though, Miss Incell said to herself, she were avowing her happiness and declaring her unworthiness in the same passionately glad breath.

The newspaperwoman watched her with interest. The domestic side of life was rather out of her line

of vision, as an observer of freakish human nature. By trade, Jessie Incell was a student of the unusual in humanity, and the sweet homeliness of the ordinary was one of the marvels her mind had not dwelt upon and her pen had not chronicled.

Long before the doctor came, though, the egotism of suffering had turned her thoughts back upon herself. She writhed in pain, as she lay alone, and in the intervals when the pain was not so intense, she lost confidence and began to question her judgment in dealing with the facts of her story as she had. Ordinarily she was not afflicted with that doubting reaction that follows upon creation. In a sense her work was creation, for she saw her subject vividly, considered it imaginatively as well as practically, and treated it with some artistic skill. Usually she finished her articles with a comfortable sense of justified fatigue and a comforting feeling of success. In the morning, the *Inquirer* usually confirmed her impression that she had handled the matter in hand in a workmanlike way, and experience told her this was enough to demand from oneself.

Pompous little Doctor Purcey found her in a state of nervous impatience and irritation which, had he known the ordinary equable course of her disposition, might have told him much about his patient's condition. By the dull, though, every-

thing incomprehensible in the more gifted is attributed to that hopelessly erratic quality, which is supposed to accompany talent. The physician examined the swollen, discolored ankle with a respect which he might have given to something declared a work of art by one in authority. He knew enough to be dissatisfied with his patient's progress, but he had the old-time physician's disinclination to reveal his real condition to the suffering layman, and took refuge from Miss Incell's clear questioning in a maze of non-committal technicalities that baffled and exasperated her.

He left her feverishly distrustful of his ability; of his lack of commonsense her quick reading of his character had left her no doubt. So she groaned and fretted and dozed and dreamed the afternoon through. She was used to busy days and companionable mates. Her mind, though not deep, was broad, and she was accustomed to feed it on a variety of subjects discussed from all points of view with the men at the office. But there was not a line of reading matter in this small house, and her easily-discouraged effort to use the doctor as a messenger to the bookstore had brought upon her a wordy discourse on literature in general and fiction in particular, which was intended only to display his

own familiarity with the subject for her admiring approval.

It was with a sense of deliverance from mortal boredom that she heard the back door close that evening when the men of the household came home from work. It was after supper when Overman came in to her. She sat up looking her welcome, when behind his back her quick eye caught the silent handclasp between Hilma and Donaghey, a handclasp so eager and so surreptitious that it had all the strength of a caress. The sight appealed to Jessie's sense of humor, but it also struck a chord that was tenderly susceptible in her depressed state, and she put up a hot hand to meet Overman's with an unconscious simulation of Hilma's gesture. He took it with a movement provokingly unlike the Irishman's; it was so fatherly and yet so queerly childlike. And he gave his attention to the qualities of the hand instead of the handclasp.

"You are feverish, Miss Incell, your hand is very hot. Have you had a hard day?" he asked, drawing up the chair that had not been occupied since the little doctor had left it.

"I've been in——" she began, but stopped; the reportorial use of strong language, she knew, was hardly as appropriate in speech as it might be mentally—"in misery all day. Your Hilma—

or rather, Mr. Donaghey's Hilma," she added mischievously, "is a jewel among women. She is patience and kindness incarnate, but she is not a conversationalist and in the intervals when I have not longed to scream, I have been pining to talk. Dr. Purcey came and talked himself, instead of listening to me. Do you know, Mr. Overman, I have a conviction that he is guilty of some stupid malpractice on that unspeakable foot of mine that may be more serious than the original injury? After he left I undid all his bandages, made Hilma throw his herb decoction out of the window, and if he only knew how my foot has kept me jumping with pain since then, he'd be revenged I think."

"Does it hurt you now?" he asked solicitously. He had been watching her curiously as she spoke.

"Not when people talk to me and entertain me."

He laughed. "All right, so far as I can. But what do you propose to do about it?"

"Just to wait and try to keep sane till Baumfelder arrives, the great Baumfelder, you know. I've met him and he has some sense even if he is a doctor. The office is sending him up to take care of me. He'll tell me whether there's anything serious in this thing or not . . . Do you know, Mr. Overman," she said breaking off suddenly, "it's a sacred newspaper custom to tell

all you know when you come back from a detail. What's the news—about yourself and Renunciants in general?"

He laughed again. There certainly was a charm about so refreshing and unconventional a young woman.

"Nothing much. There's nothing to be got out of Senn, nothing of what we've all made over to him. He belongs to the Venus Fly-trap species of capitalists; all the traps are so hinged that whatever goes in may never come out."

"Yes?"

She looked up at him with all her old interest in other people's affairs. It was very pleasant and homelike here now, Miss Incell felt, with Hilma putting away the supper things and Donaghey going about doing chores for her and whistling very melodiously under his breath. The long summer twilight made lights unnecessary, the doors and windows looking out upon the forest were wide open, and an atmosphere of simple domesticity pervaded the place, infinitely soothing to jangled nerves and depressed spirits.

"But Will and I will be busy till winter comes working on Beebe's place," he went on quite ready to respond to her interest, though not altogether understanding her motive. "We'll earn

enough to keep Hilma and the little place going and after that——”

“Yes?”

“Well, frankly, I don’t know what after that . . . Am I being interviewed?” he asked with a smile. “Surely no one cares. . . .”

She looked a reproach. She had the capacity to make friends readily and she was accustomed to meeting men upon a sort of brotherly basis. The novelty of her acquaintance with this man and his care of her gave her a sense of companionship with Overman, whom she had known only as the subject for a freak story forty-eight hours ago. But the effectiveness of her unspoken reproach was lessened by a smothered chuckle from Donaghey.

The Irishman had sat down on the door-step to read the bundle of papers he had brought with him. In the strenuous necessity for bringing a little three-roomed home out of the chaos of their sudden departure from the Fraternity fold, these three were probably the only people in Little Gap who had not yet enjoyed Jessie Incell’s expose of the Renunciant cult, and the peculiarly personal method with which she had done her work. Donaghey with an extension to the writer of that shame-facedness which he would have experienced had he been in her place, fancied that Miss Incell

would be embarrassed by having her communication to the paper read in her presence. So he had retreated to the front door steps, expecting to inform himself unnoticed of just how this newspaperwoman had been impressed, when his sudden outburst of merriment attracted attention to him. Throwing delicacy to the winds then, he came in holding the big-lettered sheet ostentatiously before him and chuckling as he read aloud.

“‘He made a picturesque figure standing there in the twilight, his long, straight body and handsome, earnest face set off by the coarse simplicity of his attire. “My name is Overman,” he said with quiet dignity’ “By the bones of Saint Simon, Adonis Anthony, how does that strike you?”

Overman tore the paper from his hands. He stood looking, as though what he saw was unbelievable, from the girl on the lounge to the sensational exploitation in her sketch and interview of his personality. His growing liking for her, his pity for her suffering were drowned in a nauseating consciousness of the unwarranted impudence of the thing he was reading. He flushed hot with anger and distaste. So this was what she meant by an interview, and this was the use she had put him to! The paper slipped from his fingers and he turned from her, trying to conceal his indig-

nation reminding himself that she was a woman and helpless and his guest. But she was wholly unconscious of the effort he made and quite innocent of having given offense. The sight of the paper, her own paper, containing her own story had roused all her professional instinct.

"If you don't give me those papers," she threatened laughingly, "I'll get up and take them from you."

She seized the sheets avidly that Donaghey brought her.

"Fancy being two days without your own paper when it's starring your most sensational story!" she murmured wholly absorbed.

She glanced quickly over the illustrations; saw her sketch of Overman completed in Ordway's showy, insincere style and labeled "Anthony, the Adonis of the Renunciants"; noted that her editor had retained the sub-head she had suggested under the picture of the photograph of Brother Jared, leader of the schism—"If Senn must get drunk, why don't he do it privately?"; saw the uncut length of the story, the prominence given it and her name; read the flaring headlines over again and sank back with a sigh of gratification, of thorough content.

"The *Inquirer's* all right," she cried. "Here's to the office!"

Her words might have been an invocation, for a man suddenly blocked the doorway, repeating them with a seconding cordiality.

"That's good loyal doctrine. Here's to it!" he said coming in upon them and hurrying toward her. "You bet it's all right, for it gave me the detail of coming up to rescue you, Jessie Incell."

He was a smooth-shaven fellow with a cynical mouth and a clear, alert eye. He walked with an unmistakeable air of confidence in himself and on his entrance took possession of the centre of the little stage with a manner that was as arrogant as it was unconscious.

"Dean Morgan!" Jessie held out both hands which he took, bending over her with an empressment half-sincere, half-burlesque. She drew back then saying saucily, "It's purely in your official capacity that I am falling upon your neck, Mr. Morgan. It's like a whiff of home to see someone from the office."

"I quite understand, you needn't make it so plain, Miss Incell," he rejoined readily with a grin. "It was a purely official kiss, a family caress of a joint and several community nature which I was about to imprint upon your chaste journalistic cheek."

"Journalistic cheek! That's just what yours is," she cried. "It's awfully kind of you, but you

know you're famous in the local room for over-doing your details."

"Upon my honor as a journalist, Miss Incell, I swear to you it was the Boss's orders that——"

"Bosh!"

He laughed good-naturedly and turned to the tall, stout man who had followed him and still stood in the doorway, curiously looking in.

"Come in, Doctor," Morgan said. "I don't think you'll find your patient's condition very serious, if one may judge by the fact that she's quite as impertinent as she ever was."

To the Swedish girl, they seemed to fill the little roughly finished room, these two prosperous-looking men with their well-made city clothes and their manner of being born to comfort, to a knowledge of the world and how to make use of the good things in it. When Miss Incell turned to introduce her friends to her hosts, she found that both Donaghey and Overman had disappeared, while Hilma's round gray eyes and pink cheeks attested her excitement and appreciation of the honor done her rude little home.

"You may go outside and smoke while the doctor looks at my ankle," Miss Incell said to her fellow journalist. "Mrs. Donaghey will help us, won't you Hilma? Do come in."

"I will happy be," stammered the Swedish girl shyly.

"Doctor Baumfelder, Mrs. Donaghey—a born nurse, doctor, the softest-fingered, lightest-footed creature that was ever seen off the boughs of a tree. She's simply been too kind to me."

"No—no!" Hilma blushed furiously.

"And Mr. Morgan, Hilma, a facetious reporter on the *Inquirer*, whose head is swelled because he's been made assistant city editor. Go outside now, like a nice child," she waved a dismissing hand toward Morgan, "and keep out of mischief if you can."

"All right, ma'am."

Morgan dropped his overcoat on a chair and walked out and down the rude steps. The forest was evidently the back-yard of this primitive cottage which fronted the road, but between it and the white strip, narrow here almost as a path, there was a space of tangled vines and decapitated trees in which two men were working. Morgan lighted a cigar and walked over toward them.

"Good-evening. Have a cigar?" He held out a couple.

"I don't smoke," said Donaghey.

"You make a mistake," Morgan said puffing pleasantly. "Won't you have one?" he turned to Overman.

"Thank you, I've got to go in now."

"What for?" asked Morgan, for the reason that he always asked a question when he wanted an answer.

"To wash dishes." Overman turned his back upon the newspaperman and disappeared round the rear of the house.

"Sociable kind of fellow that," laughed Morgan. "I wonder what sort of husband he really makes."

"He's not the husband, I am," said Donaghey crossly.

"Why don't you do the dish-washing then?"

"Why don't you mind your own business?"

"And me a newspaperman! Now, isn't it too much you are asking? What the devil's the matter with you two anyway? One would think I was Christopher Columbus come up to discover and defraud the natives."

"We don't like reporters," said Donaghey shortly as he turned to follow his friend.

"That's not surprising. Reporters can't like you either but they can let you know it without behaving like savages. But that's not what I wanted to say. The *Inquirer* has sent me up here to see that Miss Incell gets the best of care. You understand, don't you, that the paper is responsible for all her bills? Just hand yours to me when you're ready."

"There isn't any to hand—there won't be any," Donaghey called over his shoulder.

"Well I'll be"

The Irishman's departure rendered completion of his sentence unnecessary, and Morgan strolled about the little space in the dusk, puffing contentedly at his cigar, and then lighting another and another, wasting no thought, apparently, upon the encounter. He was glad, though, when the big surgeon appeared at the door and beckoned to him.

"I say, Jessie," Morgan began even as he mounted the steps, "this is a queer joint you've fallen into. We must get you out of it good and quick. A girl I know is the Boss's white-haired boy since this Renunciant scoop of yours was delivered, and I'm to spend the shekels generously for you. A congenial detail—well, I wonder! . . . I say, what's the matter?"

Miss Incell opened a pair of dull, suffering eyes in an ashy face. She smiled wanly up at Morgan but did not speak.

"The able country practitioner has been getting in his deadly work," explained Baumfelder, an eminent member of his profession, his skill being supplemented and directed by a fund of practical

commonsense which was evidenced in everything he undertook, except his Bohemian connections with newspaper people, whom he persisted in investing with a literary spirit utterly foreign to their work. "And I have had to undo it. Miss Incell's a heroine," he added.

Baumfelder had two fads, women and journalists. To find the two combined in one appealed to the little that was weak in him.

But Miss Incell raised a deprecating hand. "Let your editorial columns be free from bias, Doctor," she said weakly. "Honesty's the best policy there in the long run, for the simple reason that you're bound to be seen through. I'm what a cockney reporter on the *Inquirer* used to call 'a bleddy haound' when it comes to submitting to surgical torture. You've taken the starch out of me and——"

"And you'd better not talk any more," he said, as ungallantly severe in his professional capacity as he was mendaciously complimentary on his social side. "Go to sleep, Miss Incell. Dean and I'll go up to the hotel and to-morrow morning we'll come down to see how you're progressing. Good-night. Good-night, Nurse."

The great man smilingly held out his hand to the confused Swedish girl, who wiped her own on her apron before she took the long, beautifully

strong white fingers reverently for a moment in hers.

“Good-night, you poor little girl,” Morgan whispered almost tenderly.

But the clever Miss Incell must have been too exhausted even to resent his tone.

CHAPTER V

“ONE has the sensation of resting on the bosom of Abraham when she’s in your care,” Miss Incell said gratefully to her physician in answer to his query as to how she had slept.

There was very little of the coquette about this young woman, but it was not in feminine flesh and blood wholly to resist the influence of this woman worshiper.

“My first name is Paul,” murmured the great surgeon appreciatively. “It is my brother—a man literally devoid of enthusiasms, except for ptomaines who was called after the father of our tribe.”

“Thank you,” said his patient pertly.

At which they both laughed, clearing the flirtatious atmosphere and settling down to business. Through all this light badinage the Swedish girl listened soberly, in gentle incomprehension. She looked upon the great surgeon with awed eyes, only a degree less admiring than the gaze with which she beheld Jessie Incell, a woman perfectly at her ease with such men as this. And Baumbfelder, with that quick and pleased recognition of thoroughness in any capacity, which marked his nature, was able to put Hilma as nearly at her ease as it was possible for so shy a creature to be. The

appearance of Morgan, though, always embarrassed her to the point of disappearance.

"It's a disease of the native up in this part of the world," the young man said laughing after Hilma had escaped. "There's something eerie, Jessie, about the folk one meets about this enchanted cottage. The moment you speak to them they disappear. It's this habit, their love of keeping dark and laying low and mortifying their natural inquisitiveness that has given them their community name, I suppose. As a matter of fact, I don't believe there's anybody alive here except the doctor, you and me, Miss Incell. The others are wraiths—with damn bad manners."

Miss Incell pulled herself upright, earning a reproof, which she ignored, from Baumfelder for her impulsiveness.

"They're the nicest people in the world, Dean Morgan," she declared ardently. "I know people whose manners would earn even your commendation, Mr. Assistant City Editor, who haven't the taste and natural kindness of these."

"Which of them—the boors I ran on to last night?"

"I won't have you speak like that!" she said sharply. "The office didn't send you up here to say nasty things about people who've been kind

to me. And you mustn't quarrel with me. It affects my temper—ature, doesn't it, Doctor?"

So Morgan sat down amiably and gossiped the morning away. He told Miss Incell all the latest personal details of the office—who was rumored up and who down since the Boss's return; who had made a scoop and who had fallen down; and who was about to flit from one journalistic perch to another; of the artist who was scheming to get on the *Inquirer* and the restless reporter who was about to leave it; of the newest social scandal and the latest political development. He talked well and wittily and she enjoyed to the full a return in spirit to the busy, impertinent, knowing atmosphere that was so congenial to her.

At noon Hilma served luncheon and Doctor Baumfelder, the most fastidious epicure in a club of gourmets, partook of the fried ham, the biscuits and tea with a pretense of enjoyment that delighted the little Swede.

The two men lounged off during the afternoon striding over the little town, the observed of all the curious eyes in Little Gap which looked upon the accident to Jessie Incell in their midst as one of those unexpected boons which Providence occasionally bestows upon the deserving. It was vouchsafed to Doctor Purcey to meet and greet the great Baumfelder, to walk with him through

Little Gap's one street, to be invited to take a drink at the hotel, and to be gently but firmly turned out of his case without his even so much as suspecting that his treatment of it had met with anything but the fullest approval. He displayed the generous check Morgan had drawn for his services at the grocery store, in the ostensible course of cashing it, and his acquaintance with the noted surgeon became one of those myths in his memory which grow in the reciting and in proportion to the recession of its origin in antiquity.

But when Baumfelder told Miss Incell that evening after examining her ankle, that she must look forward to a stay of some weeks in the little town, she promptly and petulantly refused to obey; a bit of feminine perversity whose significance Doctor Baumfelder was altogether too wise to overvalue, especially as his patient's mind turned immediately to a remorseful realization of what exile from town must mean to these two city-bred visitors.

"Go back, both of you," she commanded. "Take the night train—only lost souls dare try the day one in summer—and leave me to my fate. Stay? Of course, I'll have to stay, a while anyway. But I know what'll become of me. I'll turn Renunciant in despair, I know I will, and become old Senn's private secretary. I'll comb my

hair back straight, forget how to take a joke and pass into the fold, recanting all my errors and burning the *Inquirer* publicly at a midnight orgie on top of Renunciant Hill . . . Dost like the picture, Doctor?"

"Don't say you like any picture for which she poses, even a renouncing one, now don't, Baumfelder," interrupted Morgan. "She's already so spoiled that there's no standing her."

The two men departed in a whirl of facetious sentiment that left the little cottage quite quiet and isolated. Hilma had listened to the doctor's last directions like an acolyte before the high priest, as Morgan phrased it, and it was agreed that Baumfelder should come up again to Little Gap in a week should circumstances require it, and that Morgan should come whenever Miss Incell telegraphed for him.

It was a strange life that now opened before the young woman, a life of long, still days and long, silent nights. The uneventful monotony of the time lay upon her at first as a tangible load of hours and stillness. The isolation of the little cottage, the unaccustomed idleness and the rigidity of pose against which Miss Incell's spirit and her body chafed, together with the knowledge that all this was not for a day but for an indefinite number of days that stretched dully ahead of her—this

threw the stricken journalist into a state of nervous irritation, from which she suddenly awakened to the piqued consciousness that she had not seen Overman for a week and demanded of herself the reason for his neglect.

She was rather a spoiled young woman, though a very practical one. Her talent, her bonhomie, an unpretentious ease of manner, her frank and unaffected good-nature and a sterling sense of humor made her welcome among the men at the office who liked a good fellow, whether that fellow were masculine or feminine. She was accustomed to finding people quite ready to like her, and civilizing contact with the other sex had taught her not to demand too much of the ensuing friendship. She knew men and liked them and was not given to overestimating their vices nor undervaluing their virtues. She took it as a matter of course that they should treat her differently than other women were treated, seeking her out and making their points for the benefit of her criticism or admiration, precisely as she herself sought them. She had so long ceased to regard men solely from the point of view which hampers yet thrills femininity that it did not occur to her to conceal a liking for any particular one of them when it took possession of her. Anything deeper or more disturbing than lik-

ing had not yet entered into her busy scheme of things.

She watched Hilma one long afternoon for hours trying to decide just how she could present the subject. It irritated her to know that she was planning a strategic attack upon that which there was no admissible reason she should not approach frankly. And, stung by the thought, she suddenly opened with a question.

"Hilma, where is Mr. Overman?"

"Anthony?" The Swedish girl turned her eyes upon Miss Incell, who fidgeted beneath that clear, childish gaze fancying it saw farther than it really did. "He stays now at Beebee's—Anthony."

"All day and all night too?"

"He works the day. By night he sleeps there."

"Because I have taken his place here?"

"No—surely. For he and Will, the both, sleep together. And often, when it hot is like now, they sleep outside the trees under."

"Why then doesn't he come home."

The simple phrase as she spoke it touched a hitherto silent chord in Jessie Incell. She had never before been placed in the position so familiar to women; it was she who "came home"; not any man who came home to her.

"That I do know not," Hilma answered simply.

Miss Incell pondered a moment. "Well, tell him then—tell Will to tell him that I want to see him."

Hilma bowed her head obediently. Nothing was to be denied this marvelous woman who issued orders to men and met them on a footing that the Swedish girl considered little short of sacrilegious.

Overman came the next evening. It was after supper at the end of a hot day, and in her pleasure at the prospect of any change in the slow monotony of existence, Miss Incell would have welcomed him with that eager, boyish interest in others which made an introduction to her an experience, had it not been for his own manner.

"How do you do?" he asked civilly. "I hope you are better. You wanted to see me—is there anything I can do for you?"

As she looked up at him she experienced a variety of emotions; she told herself that disgust was the predominating one.

"Yes," she said shortly, "a number of things. For one, you might take a seat instead of towering above one like an uncomfortable genius who had come unwillingly, because he couldn't help it when the lamp was rubbed."

"Do I make you nervous, Aladdin?" he laughed obeying her.

She was surprised herself at the pleasure the change in his tone gave her.

"To be frank, you make me—'tired'," she said, but with no faultfinding in her voice. "You put me in the position of asking the reason why and I'm not accustomed to asking the reason, for I don't usually care."

"'Why' what?"

"Why you are so grudging in your hospitality as to compel your guest to imagine a reason for your keeping out of her way."

He made an indignant motion, but checked it.

"And what reason have you imagined, Miss Incell?"

"There can be but one—that you resent my being here."

"You know that isn't true."

"Of course I do," she laughed. "But in the name of all that's feminine, what else could I say to a man so shamelessly straightforward as you are, who's too good to lie even a little bit for politeness' sake and to a girl!"

"Don't—don't say anything," he urged. "You make me feel ashamed of myself now that I am with you and——"

"Didn't it occur to you," she demanded severely rejoicing in the ease with which she had

won, "that I must make some arrangement with you toward paying for my expenses here?"

"With me? No."

"Why not? Isn't it your house? Didn't all that's left of your money pay for it?"

"Hilma has told you. Yes, but the place is hers. She will accept nothing from you, you know that."

"She must—or I won't stay here."

He smiled. "What will you, what can you do?"

"I can have myself taken up to that fiendish hotel," she smiled back, "where I shall be driven mad by a trained nurse sent up from the city by the office."

"You wouldn't do so foolish a thing."

"Oh, wouldn't I? You don't know me."

"The doctor has forbidden you to move," he said earnestly.

"But the doctor can't make me forfeit my self-respect for an old crooked ankle."

"I do hope you will not insist."

"But I will—if you make me. I'd rather limp than fall upon you three like a highwaywoman and hold you up for such services—leaving out the way in which Hilma has given them—as any hospital in San Francisco would make the *Inquirer* shed tears of gold to pay. If you won't listen to me I'll speak to Hilma."

"Do."

"I shall. But there's another thing. Don't you suppose Hilma's bored to death with me and deserves some help from you in the task of bearing with me?"

"You know she is devoted to you. You have made her love you in these few days, love to wait upon you."

"There is an uncomplimentary surprise in your voice, Mr. Overman. Well, don't you suppose that she and her husband get tired of an eternal third person around, who is simply thrown upon their mercy? Don't you suppose they'd like you to take me off their hands so that they could be alone occasionally?"

"No."

"You don't!" Her eyes were merrily cynical. "Why should they be different from other people?"

"I have told you. And, as you have expressed it in your article when you spoke of Senn, 'Discussion of such subjects may as well be confined to the medical profession; normal people consider them unfit for publication.' "

"Not indelicately put, do you think?" she asked with pretended innocence, but she was consumed with anger.

"There would have been more delicacy in not putting it at all," he said stiffly.

"Oh, indeed! I thought you were going to compliment me on my moderation. But what's a newspaper reporter for then?"

"I'm sure," he said slowly, "I don't know."

"So that's it—eh?" She sat up straight and met his eyes angrily; angrily conscious, too, that he could anger her.

He did not answer for a moment. When he did speak his voice was so gentle that it rebuked the acerbity in her own.

"No, this is what it is. You have made me ridiculous—which is nothing, for I am an obscure individual and, as you may imagine, one who has so little care for conventionalities as to join a crank community cannot be very susceptible to what people think or say of him. But I did meet you fairly and frankly that night and, because you are a woman perhaps or because my mind was still a-whirl with change, having to choose suddenly a new viewpoint from which to measure things—anyway, I spoke to you as a man does not speak to the world at large. I repeat, I am of no importance, but the treachery——"

"Treachery!"

"Yes, the treachery, in spirit, in effect, is not such because it was done to me. The pitiable state in which you found us, Will, Hilma and me, might have appealed to a thoughtful woman or

one who had a heart. It was only material for you, and the dishonorable use——

“I like that!” She blazed at him.

“It was dishonorable,” he went on sternly, “for you knew well that if I could have anticipated that sensational, unfair, intensely and impertinently personal article of yours, I should not have spoken to you, I should not have provided you with material for it. You knew what you were going to do with it. You took care not to let me know——”

“I did not—I did not consider you at all. I never thought to see you or speak to you again!” she exclaimed hotly.

“And for that reason you took a mean advantage of our position, of my foolish candor, and you served us up as a ridiculous lot of fools, without any regard for the deeper significance our folly betokened. It was the act of a clever, conscienceless, frivolous woman. There is a noblesse oblige binding upon those whose mental endowment has put them in the aristocracy of brains; its obligations include a reverence for honest, hopeful belief in the betterment of worldly conditions. For what is the petty product of men’s thought compared to the only work on earth that is worth doing—making it a better, easier, finer place to live in? God made man——”

"Did he? Are you so sure of that? I'm not and I don't care by the equivocation of silence to pretend to such a belief, when neither I—nor you—nor anyone else can know anything about it."

She saw with satisfaction that she had shocked him.

"I am sorry," he said slowly. "I wandered, as I am apt to, because of my interest in the thing that fills my thought. What I started to say is that such men and women as you lower their order, the order of intellect, when they put their gifts to such base, trivial use as this; when they point out the obviously weak and ridiculous steps by which humanity is striving to crawl forward and upward, and lazily or ignorantly or cruelly ignore the fact that the movement *is* onward, upward. Such natures would see the dust on the hem of Christ's gown as He passed and gleefully put all their talents to mock at it, never once realizing that He had passed, so blind are they to the glory of His presence, so deaf to the ineffable music of His words!"

He had risen and was standing, his stern eyes blazing down upon her. She had fallen back upon her pillow, her face white with anger.

"And so," her words fell like cool, ironical drops upon the heated silence, "so you stayed away to punish me?"

"No"

"Well?"

"To punish me," he said simply.

She looked up eagerly.

"For still—liking you in spite of it," he answered the compelling question in her eyes.

Her lids fell with the answer and a silence came upon the little room and on them both. Overman stood looking down upon her with a queer expression in his troubled eyes that seemed to plead with her to help him against herself. She did not meet his gaze. She was wondering why she no longer felt the smallest irritation at his arraignment of her. His last admission—the old self-surrender of all his weapons in one that man makes to woman—blotted out everything else.

"What a crank you are!" she sighed at last happily.

CHAPTER VI

DOCTOR BAUMFELDER'S assistant, who came up to Little Gap during the following week to see Miss Incell, reported to his chief and to the managing editor of the *Inquirer* that, although convalescence had set in and the nursing of his patient was all that could be desired, the young woman's recovery was bound to be very slow. She had used the ankle after fracturing the small bone whose misplacement was but half the trouble, abrading the skin which the country doctor's herbal treatment had slightly infected. Though all danger of any serious result was quite at an end, the young lady should positively not put her weight on that foot for weeks to come; nor should she be hurried even with the use of a crutch. He begged to add, however, that the country air itself was highly beneficial, that the patient was cheerful and had every necessary convenience, despite the peculiarities of the odd little household, and she seemed not at all impatient to get away when he left Little Gap.

The next train after the one which took the assistant back to San Francisco brought Miss Incell a huge bunch of civilized roses from her editor, a box of candy that was built up like a saccharine cave-dweller's house from Morgan, a

letter from Baumfelder, which began with strictly professional and lucid directions as to further precautions her nurse must take, and ended with a personal, flirtatious touch that was thoroughly characteristic.

Truly Miss Incell was very content. Her trunk had been sent up to her, she received the papers regularly, by every mail she got books and magazines. She wearied often of bodily inaction, but mentally and physically she seemed to be tasting a new experience that demanded nothing of her save easy, pleasant acquiescence.

Her papers and books had at last bridged over the distrust with which Donaghey had at first regarded her. The Irishman, who had hitherto avoided her or been silent and ill-at-ease in her presence, fancying that her eyes were still and always exercising their critical, inquisitive, reportorial function, had a passion for reading which was like that of a child whose starved, virgin mind wakes suddenly to realization of the fact that men have thought and written. He had an argumentative, impressionable mind, and he fell into the habit of discussing all he read with this girl-journalist, for the pleasure it was to listen to her cynical comment which reflected the behind-the-scenes atmosphere of the office where she had learned disillusion, but without bitterness. And

she bound him more strongly to her by playing fairy god-mother to his wishes; causing the books to appear almost immediately which he coveted as soon as he read of them in the book-reviews.

With Donaghey's surrender the rough-hewn walls of the little log cabin in the forest became the scene of a simply-lived, homelike idyl, whose magic the four who dwelt within learned to look back upon and wonder at, as they might who have passed through dreamland awake.

A radiance of peace illumined Hilma's fair face in those days; every common detail of woman's lot was glorified for her in that sun that lights up personal experience once in a woman's lifetime and makes the scheme of creation seem to her a thing planned with reference solely to herself as its object and end. She finished one labor and began another, feeling in each an intimate interest and pleasure that made her busy days a symphony of praise and thanksgiving. She loved every stick and stone upon the premises; they were hers. She spent a wealth of loving care and forethought upon every household detail, and her cheerful thrift, her ingenuity and patient industry made every one in the little place so comfortable that isolation from the world was robbed of its pains and yielded only pleasure.

The same miracle that haloed common things

for the Swedish girl wrought in Donaghey a desire for home-building, to which he yielded as unthinkingly as the sparrow does. He had patient, skilful fingers and the delight of the dextrous in using them. To beautify the interior of the cottage became the hobby of his leisure hours, and the unpainted redwood with its beautiful rippling grain—like the motion of a wave mirrored in substantial wood—responded to every lover-like touch he spent upon it. For hours in the evening, while Overman read aloud, and all day Sunday he would sit finishing a cabinet he had set into the wall, perfecting the polish on a door panel, or inventing means for lightening Hilma's labor. It was his genius intuitively to know the secrets of the joiner's trade and to display taste in this direction that he was guiltless of in any other, and the bent of his mind made this employment the means best adapted to rest and refresh him. Jessie Incell used to let her eyes wander from Hilma's gentle activity to the perfection of repose suggested by the little Irishman's absorbed stillness while only his hands moved, and she said to herself that these two complemented each other so exquisitely that it seemed but one life both lived.

To both Overman and Jessie the zest of discovering that there was nothing so trivial in the life or thought of the one that did not outweigh in

interest for the other every deed and fact in mankind's experience—to both this experience came as a revelation so gentle and so gradual that neither realized the consequences of yielding to it. On the evening when they were stirred most strongly to self-revelation, they had been sitting out alone in front of the cottage.

"It's your turn now," Miss Incell said, as she finished a quick, humorously insincere account of herself. "Confess now and begin at the beginning. 'I was born of poor but honest parents.'"

"Poor? Yes. Very, very poor. Honest? I believe so—but do you really care to know?" he asked, the absorbed interest in her piquant, alert face lending a value to all he said that he had never dreamed it might possess for any human being. "But it isn't pleasant. My childhood and boyhood was the squalid, oppressed youth of the wretched poor. I cannot look back and see myself—even in my earliest memory—without the weight of responsibility, without the tugging consciousness of being ill-fed, half-clothed and on the verge of that terribly true poverty whose meaning only the real poor know; and of them, the self-supporting children of the poor know best. I would not have you realize what it was," he added gently.

She was looking at him with that fearful pity,

that panting sympathy that a woman has for the dead and gone suffering of the boy who was father to the man she listens to, the man she yearns to shield as his mother might.

"No, I would not have you know what it was to me," he went on after a pause, "and yet you and every other human being ought to be made to realize what it is to-day, now, to other children. The bite of winter and the cursed, fetid breath of summer, the being sick and young and hopeless, the fearful definiteness of the consequence of not working or not being able to get work, the foul knowledge of vice and crime thrust into one's face like a nauseating rag that cuts one off from the pure air, and the awful—God, the awful sight of suffering women and children! Do you wonder I'm a crank? Why, a crank is only one who knows these things and can't forget them."

He had a voice, Jessie Incell said to herself that, however great the wretchedness its words depicted, could not lose its tang of hope and defiance. It was this note of courage sounding like a bugle call in the very thick of defeat, that called to her despite her easy pessimism.

"Go on—tell me," she murmured.

"You can understand, can't you," he asked appealingly, "how such a child, such a boy, such a man, who had raised himself at last above the

mire, would be haunted by the faces, the cries of the damned he had left still floundering, choking in it? And you can see how such a man—knowing, as the poor do know how small is the margin upon which human beings can exist, how very, very little suffices—should risk all he had when an idealistic scheme that promised wholesale redemption from earthly misery came like a revelation to him? I'd like you to understand—not merely to fasten an easy name to me and pass on—please.”

She threw out her hand with a quick deprecating gesture and he went on.

“You see when one has watched blind philanthropy beggar beggars still more effectually; when one has seen the wretches fall back into the bog through sheer lack of strength to take the helping hand that's held out to them; when one has learned the depths of human depravity, the limits of human weakness, the boundlessness of human suffering, if he thinks at all, he must become one of two things—a despairing pessimist or a dogged dreamer who is bound to persist in his search for a remedy through disappointment and defeat, for the simple reason that he is unable to desist. He is possessed by a passion, a madness that makes him sure there is but one thing in the world worthy man's best thought and full strength, the making of it fit to

live in. He'll be made the tool—as I was—of schemers; his very idealism will lead him into such company as will put his ideals to shame; he'll die with his victory un-won, which isn't a calamity, for—for himself—he has lived in harmony with the ideals set before him, and there can be no earthly heaven finer than this. As for that for which he has worked, there will be many men after him, born as he was with a specialized bent in this one direction; humanity-lovers, who follow the tendency of their natures as inevitably as the workers in a bee-hive follow theirs and fulfill the end for which they were created. There simply must be a better world for future generations to live in. Some men die and raise the standard of living and thinking a millionth of a human inch by the lever of spiritualized sentiment. Others live and are not sure whether they are lifting or depressing the scale. It drops in time with the weight of human selfishness and stupidity, but it is bound to rise again—even though it fall again—because of the irresistible strength of the whole of a man's genius when it is unswervingly pointed in one direction, and because that man is but one of many fashioned, like himself, to be an instrument. Dare one belittle the effect of such work? Can you even assert that it is hopeless? The fool who goes about it, to my notion, is a

thousand times wiser than the wise man who ignores it. The doctors who prescribe unavailingly for it are scientifically nearer perfect understanding of it than those who selfishly pass it by. I'd rather ease a child's back of his load for an hour than win the greatest victory history has recorded. I'd rather be a prop to a drunkard's will—a prop that will sustain him once, though he fall a hundred other times—than write the Bible under Jehovah's dictation. It's an age of specialization, Miss Incell, I was born to be a crank. Just how I shall go about it the next time I don't know, but I do know that the same ardor, the same confidence that got me into Senn's clutches will accompany the process when I get on my feet and try again."

There was a lighter tone in his voice as he finished speaking, an unworded apology for the seriousness of his subject. But his earnestness, the saturation of his soul with the thing that possessed him stirred her as she would not have believed a month ago she could be moved.

"I wonder," she said wistfully, "how much of himself a man has the right to will away from—from his relations? Shouldn't there be a moral law to cover such a question? I've met your brothers, you know," she added in a tone that was more characteristic. "You're a big family, you

cranks, and in a way I have a specialty myself—which is studying and serving up you specialists. I'll admit that one crank washes another out of my mind; they follow upon my attention in such quick succession, and I do lose interest in the particular crankiness that absorbs each of them. But I have never gone away from an interview with one of them that I haven't found myself, (in spite of my determination always to remain a spectator) brooding over the family relations of the crank in question. It's the mother of a crank that most interests me. In my fancy she dwells—a whole colony of her, sonned by varied fads embodied in flesh and blood—a creature that is everything—proud, miserable, loving, disappointed—everything but happy. What becomes of the fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and—and wives of cranks? What is their place in Crankology?"

She could always make him smile, and it would have disturbed Miss Incell not a little could she have known how well worth while it seemed to her to be the cause of one of those short, amused laughs with which he greeted this gay little sally of hers.

"I don't know—from experience," he said, and then more seriously, "my father died before I was born; he was killed in the mine and he left, mercifully, but one child for mother to struggle for in her

poverty. And we did struggle, we two. It was a campaign without truce, in which the din of battle deafened us by day and haunted our dreams at night. She—was killed in action—after a gallant fight, early in the engagement. And for years before I even knew that the fight was on, she had never taken off her armor. It's a thing like that—the irrevocably past misery and death of one's best-beloved, weaker than oneself, whom one might stay and comfort now, if it were not too late, if she had only waited till one was strong enough—that makes tigers of men—or altruists—cranks. For it requires no feat of imagination, no stretching of sympathy to know that other boys are watching their mothers go down under the blows and shocks of war on weaker humanity. And other tender, brave eyes are glazing in death, their last, half-conscious thought a prayer for the poor little comrade in arms . . . Oh!"

He did not see how almost maternal was the look with which this girl regarded him, for he was gazing far off into the past. When he did throw back his head, as though physically to put away memories that overwhelmed him, and turned to her, her eyes were downcast and she was asking half-timidly,

"But—what can one do?"

"Do!" he cried—the question got him to his

feet. "There's only one thing to do, there can be but one—To say the thing your soul says, to live the life your heart wills, to die the death your imagination approves and your spirit sanctions! That's what one can do. To live the inner life that possesses one, openly in all its depth, in all its changefulness, in all its seeming lawlessness. Yet to keep one law, the highest, the only one; to keep that inviolate, changing freely, fully as it appears to you to change, or as you, in your greater light, learn to interpret it—the law of individual liberty, the centre of the soul's gravity about which the world revolves. Do! Why, 'put your creed into your deed.' Dare to do the thing that tempts you, toward which your whole being yearns and turns with a strength that is irresistible. The pity is when the impulse is only almost irresistible. Oh, if only every strong impulse toward honesty, toward beauty, toward altruism that moves one would make its history, not only in our own lives, but in others'. If only no man could withstand the force that impels him to do this, to be that, and later another person, another thing. Dare to be free. Free to do the thing you crave to do and that craves the doing. Free to live in that higher realm where none is fit to criticize save one's self. Free to scorn ridicule, to face contempt, to brave remorse. Free to give

life to the one human soul that can demand and grant such a boon—one's own self. To scorn a shame and strike a knave and openly curse a time-server. To lift this one up, not because he is weak, but because his cause is just and as such demands your service as no king, however great, no god however high commanded subject however loyal and lowly, nor devotee, however, bigoted. To give to the cause that claims your reverence swift complete subservience. To feel to the full every passion, ethical and emotional, of which you are capable. To believe and love and suffer and be disillusioned. To be false, if necessary to be true to yourself. Yet being true to yourself you could not be false, for no one can promise more than he can fulfill. To live, to live! To know no coward half-life where one's greater self, stifled and loathing, struggles though chained to and gagged by the lesser one. To die a martyr, if that be necessary, or live an outlaw. To suffer for principle, while it is principle to you, and to disregard it the moment it loses significance for you. To foster to its fullest flourishing the flower of your soul till it develops such strange and wonderful growths as even you did not dream of. To do everything that fancy—fancy which is the inspired soul dreaming—dictates; to do it regardless, freely, joyfully, with never a cowardly second thought,

but to act upon impulse and instinct as upon a clarion call. To be all that you would. To live all the lives that are in you. No longer to train this side and restrain that, to clip and mold and mar, as a Japanese gardener cripples and mars the plant he dwarfs, as we dwarf and cripple the souls within us and make a monstrosity, not a human poem of the material given us.

"To live this life, these lives, and to die unregretful, however unsuccessful as the world reckons success. For there really is but one failure—the failure to live your own life, your life, your only one. Failing this you live none at all. You are only a shadow of another and often, more's the irremediable pity, of another shadow.

"Oh, never to know myself a coward and pitifully seek self-excuse! Never to feel that soul-devouring contempt of the thing the world and I have made of myself! Never to walk with shamed eyes before one braver than myself, and holier, because not a traitor to himself. Never, never to say 'It might have been', but 'It was' or 'it is' or 'It shall be.' To testify to the truth when it is the truth to me, so long as it remains the truth—this only. I have tired you. Oh, see, what a miserable, selfish crank I am!" he cried remorsefully.

"No," her voice was very weary and she was looking at him with envy and with pity, "but I

believe I am tired—of myself. Will you help me to go in now? It must be late.”

Out here under the trees the dusk had come upon them almost without their realizing it.

“You must forgive me,” he said as he stooped to lift and carry her into the house. “I am an ill-balanced talker whom a sympathetic listener causes to topple over. I could only speak so to you—I have hardly said as much to myself—but you can see now what egoists we who think ourselves altruists really are.”

She did not answer except to wish him good-night, as he helped her to the lounge and went off to find Donaghey. Hilma came in after a little, her sewing in her busy hands, but Jessie had undressed without her aid and was lying with her hands clasped over her head.

“Just stay and sew here a bit, won’t you, Hilma?” she asked when her nurse would have withdrawn.

“I am afraid I will keep you awake.”

“No, you won’t. I can’t go to sleep just yet. Do you remember, Hilma, when you were little being afraid sometimes to go to sleep alone? I’m feeling little to-night, almost contemptibly small, and I’m afraid. There are nights when one had better shut the door on things that are trying to think themselves. I’m not ready to

entertain; my house is not in order. Let's talk, Hilma."

The Swedish girl obediently drew out her basket and Jessie turned toward her, her head pillowed on her arm.

"I'm getting well, you know."

"Yes."

"And it won't be long before I'm leaving Arcadia."

"Arcadia?" Hilma repeated puzzled. "Oh! —I am sorry."

"Yes, that's why I'm glad. Never mind, but listen. Before I go you and I have got to fight out the battle the men are too cowardly to have anything to do with. You know what I mean—the idea of your pretending anything, you milk-white baby!"

The Swedish girl dropped her hands helplessly in her lap.

"Yes," Miss Incell went on, "you've got to let me pay you for at least——"

"No, I cannot."

"Yes, you can if you try," she laughed. Contact with the simplicity, the gentle directness of this girl's nature always soothed her. "See, how amiable it was of me to stay here trusting to your generosity not to let me remain in a false position."

"I do not understand."

"I know you don't."

"Talk to Anthony about it," begged Hilma.

"You fraud, you know he insists the whole grand establishment is yours!"

"To Will then," she said faintly. She bent her face over her sewing, like a child that doesn't wish to meet clear-sighted eyes.

"Will! Hilma, how can you beg the question like this?"

Hurriedly the Swedish girl rose, putting her sewing away. But Miss Incell reached out and pulled her back to her rocking chair.

"I won't insist, Hilma, not to-night anyway, if you'll only sit awhile. You've got lots of sewing to do, haven't you?' And you'll sew in the kitchen if you don't here?"

"Yes," said Hilma penitently.

"All right, do sew here then. I'll say good-night, for I may fall asleep and forget it. But just you sit there, like a little younger mother of me, and I'll slip off to sleep perhaps like a good girl—eh?"

"Yes—all right. I will pleased be if the light disturbs you not."

Miss Incell shook her head. She lay with closed eyes her arms above her head, the frill of her sleeve falling away from her well-turned wrists, the frill at her throat rising and falling

with her bosom's rhythmic breathing. She was not thinking. She was not sleeping. She was listening in fancy as she had listened in fact. But Hilma's gentle presence, the quiet of the night, the air of peace and domesticity that pervaded the place all conspired to rob the words she heard again of their restless burdening thought, and to bring to her ears, like the melodious throb of an organ's song robbed by distance of the verse that accompanies it, only the sound of a voice that woke echoes in her heart.

But she lay so long quite still that the Swedish girl thought she slept and, after a silent interlude of watching, Hilma laid aside the gingham gown she was making and, lifting a basket of white sewing from under the chintz drapery of the table where it had been hidden, she bent over it with an absorption that was but the sequel of the dream the woman lying on the lounge was dreaming.

The sudden consciousness that she was so dreaming came all at once to Jessie Incell and her eyes opened with what might have been a click of determination, if it had been accompanied by sound. She was no dreamer, but a practical, busy woman who saw herself, half in terror, half in amusement, guilty of a reverie, the significance of which she was unwilling to admit even to her waking self. But what she saw in Hilma's hands

dissipated all thought of herself. She stared unbelieving and stared again and sat up at last still staring.

"Hilma!" she cried. "Oh—Hilma!"

There was mockery in her voice and tenderness and exultation and shocked, incredulous surprise.

With a start the Swedish girl sprang to her feet. The little garment, the first crude covering for miniature humanity's nakedness, over which she had been bending secretively, adoringly, fell from her hands, and she buried in them her face, whose delicate skin was suffused by a burning wave of color.

"Oh, Hilma—and you could refuse to let me help!"

Something in Miss Incell's tone gave the girl courage to look up. She saw her friend's arms outstretched and above them the rippling tenderness of a face more given to express lighter emotions, and she felt the mockery washed away in a flood of sweet sentiment.

"Jessie—Jessie," she stammered, falling on her knees before the couch and using her guest's name for once with ease and naturalness, "what could I do?—I—I so loved him . . ."

Jessie held the abased blonde head tight in her arms. It was some moments before the Swedish girl raised her shamed, happy eyes, and then

from her lips fell a timid word that expressed the whole ineffectual struggle to live up to foster ideals, which she and her husband had adopted and tried so hard to make their own.

“But Anthony!” she whispered piteously.

Miss Incell’s arms relaxed. That wailing accent quite unwomanned her. Her shoulders shook and she fell back upon her pillow convulsed with silent laughter.

CHAPTER VII

DEAN MORGAN held in his outstretched hand a rosewood crutch.

“Miss Jessie Incell, A. M.— maid of arts, or, arts with an apostrophe, if you prefer the cockney origin of the word.” (It was Mr. Morgan’s way to play about his subject, to “chase his journalistic tail” as the reporters of the *Inquirer* put it). “On behalf of the honorable fraternity of which I am one—and you are, too—permit me to present to you this token of the local room’s esteem . . . (Tut, tut, young woman, haven’t you attended banquets enough to know that the giftee never accepts the gift till the gifter has had time to make his speech? . . . On this felicitous occasion, fellow citizens”—as Miss Incell sat back again upon the couch, Morgan turned to include in a pompous bow poor Hilma, who stood by with a bewildered, smiling face, and Donaghey who was appreciatively a-grin. “On this occasion I rise to express to you my own and your own feelings on the subject of yellow journalisttes—with two ‘t’s’ and an ‘e’. This, my friends, is the woman’s century; so called because the lydies are engaged in out-heroding Herod all over this broad free land, over which the star spangled banner of freedom and fake may ever wave.—Applause!

. . . (It's the place for it, you know it is, Jessie Incell.) . . . To continue; although man in his timid conservative way has tried to feel the sensational popular pulse and cater to that inherent yellowness which knows that fiction is stranger than fact and loves it for that reason, yet it has remained for Woman to realize the very acme, the perfection, the quintessence—I may say, the very yellow jaundice of journalism . . . (Cries of 'Hear! Hear!' 'Morgan for President!' etc., etc.) . . . My friends, I thank you. . . . Who is it that first went up in a balloon to interview a comet—the lady before me, Miss Jessie Incell! Who, braving the perils of subterranean disaster, and nausea, descended into the very bowels of the earth to inquire how its vermiform appendage was taking its sudden publicity? Who, standing fearlessly beside a lynch-ed Negro, took down in shorthand from his purpling lips the indispensable information of how it feels to be burned alive? Who accompanied a neighboring prince and princess upon their honeymoon? Who—but why multiply instances? Who but Jessie Incell knows it all? Who but Miss Incell advises us how to propose, whom to marry, what infant food industry to patronize! She accompanies us from the cradle to the grave, and her very next detail, I've a hunch, will be to write a racy eight-

hundred words giving Jehovah's opinion of the unparalleled enterprise of the *Inquirer* in sending Miss Jessie Incell (capitals five-inches long) in bloomers and the latest model flying machine all the way aloft and back in time for the first edition!

"My friends, I ask you to drink with me to the health of Miss Jessie Incell's—ankle. The toast will be drunk standing on one foot out of respect to our distinguished guest."

The speaker's words were promptly drowned in applause according to formula and Mr. Morgan, bowing to right and left, sat down flushed, as his manner intimated, with success.

"Mr. Chairman, Mr. Morgan, Ladies and Fellow sufferers," Miss Incell began, rising from her couch and balancing herself on her new crutch, "it is with feelings——"

"Hear! Hear!" cried Morgan. "She has 'em. Actually, the great and only Jessie Incell has feelin's, even as you and I!"

"Feelings," continued Miss Incell severely, "that well up from an over-bulged ankle——"

"Applause! Cheers! Laughter!" shouted Morgan.

"—that I rise to. . . Oh, Mr. Overman, come here and see the pretty thing the boys in the office have sent me! I'll be sorry when I'm no longer lame enough to use it."

Morgan turned quickly and faced Overman standing at the door.

"By all that's beautiful, 'tis Adonis!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, how yellow you are!" Miss Incell turned upon him. "And not only by profession, Dean Morgan, but by nature."

"I really am not so lovely as I've been painted," Overman said coming into the room, "nor so holy. For one thing, I resent being considered a vain fool."

Morgan looked up quickly. The answer and its tone were unexpected.

"I really beg your pardon," he said good-naturedly, "but how was I to know?"

"By putting yourself in my place."

The journalist made a motion that declared the impossibility of his changing identities, even in fancy, with one so unlike himself.

The gesture irritated Overman; it teemed with that intangible insolence which marked the newspaperman's manner to those whom he suspected of being lacking in brains or *savoir faire* or the degree of up-to-dateness that commanded his respect. But before Overman could speak, Miss Incell, stamping with her uninjured foot upon the uncarpeted floor, threw herself mentally between them.

"Don't thrash him—Anthony." She used his first name deliberately, challenging Morgan's eyes which met hers inquisitively. "Not that a beating wouldn't do him good, but because it would imply that you hadn't forgiven me and forgotten that impertinent old story. Mr. Morgan, you don't deserve it, but I am going to introduce you to Mr. Overman. I thought you two had met before. Now, do look at my present, Anthony."

She put the well-turned light little crutch into Overman's hands, laying her hand on his arm and limping back to the lounge. She pointed out the velvet-cushioned top and the silver plate upon the side with its inscription, "To One Wounded on the Battlefield," and explained at length to him what the local room meant. She dilated upon the varied characters of the "boys," who made up the news staff of the *Inquirer*, their different specialties and the "scoops" each was credited with. And she deceived only the guileless Hilma by her loquacity, for to the rest her intention was quite apparent.

But to see the self-possessed Miss Incell obviously talking against time was more than Overman could bear. As soon as a pause made it possible he turned to Morgan, appealing to him for information concerning the rumored strike of teamsters in San Francisco, and when she heard

the voice of the two raised in earnest debate over the labor question, Jessie rose with a relieved sigh and hobbled over to Hilma.

The Swedish girl was bending over Miss Incell's trunk which was packed nearly to the brim. Each article of clothing that she laid away, her long, slim hands patted caressingly. Her honest gray eyes, which she lifted to Jessie's face, were brimming with tears.

"The pine pillow we all have gathered that last day in the woods—it here is," she said with an unsteady voice. "The wild flowers you have pressed, on this side are. And—and——"

"Oh, you little goose, you dear little goose!" Miss Incell whispered putting an arm about her. "I just love to have you cry because I'm going. Do you know, Hilma, that I can't remember anybody's crying at being separated from me? The hotel-keepers regret my going but—but really you mustn't."

"It will so lonely be without you."

"Pshaw!—Hilma Donaghey, you know you'll never be lonely in all your life—now."

The Swedish girl smiled through her tears and while she and Miss Incell stepped aside for a moment, Donaghey strapped the trunk and carried it out to the wagon that Anthony had driven up to the door.

It seemed to Jessie Incell when she looked back upon it, that she had been living long, long days of undisturbed companionship, of peace, of idyllic content; and that suddenly Time, as though to make up for the lost hours, had caught her up in a whirl of preparation of which every second had to be accounted for. Her whispered colloquy with Hilma was all too short for the heartfelt words these two had to say. Then the younger woman helped her on with her jacket and hat, as a mother might the great girl she was sending off to college; the mother instinct spoke in every act of the Swedish girl in those days, it illumined her fair face, and made her look upon the unmarried woman (before whose varied experiences and accomplishments she had once humbly bowed down) as a child to be protected and tended.

It was Hilma's nature to spend herself in loving ministry; to love the creature she waited upon, and to wait upon the one she loved. Nature makes such mothers now and then, whose instinct is as blind and as irresistible as that which haunts the eyes of a lean dog, dominated by the mother-passion, and makes them terrible to meet. But the selfishness *a deux* or *a trois* which the procreative period in humanity begets, was a thing apart from this woman. She had always served, willingly, lovingly, unreasoningly; and

the prospect of having something all her own upon which to lavish herself filled her with a gentle gratitude that made the whole world her creditor. The uneven-tempered Irishman who had, as it were, called her to the holy ministry of maternity was touched and troubled by her devotion. And she watched over Anthony with the prayerful care that devout women give to their prophets; a care which is at once an apology for their own humbleness and an exercise of religiosity. But she shamed and embarrassed him by this humility and loving watchfulness over his comfort. And the meek confession of sin and unworthiness in her every tone and gesture in Overman's presence, would have tempted Miss Incell to ridicule, in the days that were done now, if it had not been for the fact that such sincerity and frank humility had in them something inherently pathetic that moistened her eye in spite of her sense of humor.

Indeed, Miss Incell's vaunted sense of humor, which, Morgan was wont to say, made her such a good fellow, such a boon companion to all the men who knew her, deserted her that last evening at Little Gap, though she tried to be gay. She sent the men out to the wagon ahead of her and while Hilma was busy in the kitchen, she stood a moment alone at the door of the living room. Here she had lain through pleasant sunny mornings. Here

they four had lived their simple idyl of comradeship. Here in the evenings Hilma had sewed and Donaghey had read or Anthony had talked and she had listened. She looked from one piece to the other in the unpretentious little place, at the work table, the latest triumph of his handiwork that Donaghey had made for Hilma; at the ferns Anthony had brought back from the mountains for herself.

"Good-bye, Arcady," she sighed half-smiling, and stretched out a hand to it in the dusk.

Then she called to Anthony and Morgan to help her down the steps and into the high wagon, and while Hilma drove slowly up the lane, the three men walked by the side. Morgan and Overman were still discussing the threatened strike and its possibilities. The newspaperman, though he had been connected during all his professional life with demagogic journals, was an aristocrat at heart and by instinct. His contempt for those who ruled the people—a disrespect founded upon the thorough knowledge the journalist gets of politics behind the scenes—was only second to that he had for the people who permitted themselves to be so governed, so cheated, so betrayed. He gave his opinions in private with that freedom with which the thinker revenges himself upon circumstances that forbid the public utterance of them

and the vivid, informal, exaggerated style of his speech had a keen attraction for Overman, who was familiar with such arguments as Morgan used only in the rather heavy, pretentious manner of the political economist.

When Hilma pulled up the horses at the railroad tracks, Morgan was launched on the full tide of such an argument as he delighted in.

"Let it come!" he sneered. "Let the strike come, the bigger the better. The *Inquirer* will go blathering mad about the wrongs of the people and I'll blather with it, of course. But I'll wait, just the same, to see them get the worst of it as they always do, and as they deserve to do. They're a lot of deluded sheep, perpetually scampering about in a panic, and driven by traitorous sheep-dogs employed by their master and enemy. They're born to be driven and beaten down. They haven't sense enough to submit nor strength enough to rebel—adequately. And they'll wind up ultimately at the slaughterhouse where they're bound for anyway!"

"I say, let it come, too," Overman cried. He lifted Jessie out upon the high sidewalk, which was on a level with the wagon's seat. His hands were gentle and steady but the battle-ring was in his voice. "Every strike's a good one. Every defeat is better than passive non-resistance.

Every victory unsettles you and such men as think like you, if only a trifle, from the seat you fancy is so secure upon the people's backs. They'll not always be sheep, you'll find out some day, and all the false shepherd dogs that betray their confidence and all the usurping owners that fatten on their pelts can't continue such an artificial state of society forever."

"They've managed to, for about all the period of the world's history that we've records of," retorted Morgan.

"With an occasional oversetting that proved the sheep to be a tiger."

"But to be caught and fettered again by the same old chain with a new name."

"But to be comparatively better off after the second chaining than before the first," insisted Overman.

"I fail to see the betterment," said Morgan shortly.

"That's because men who live as well as you bodily, and in the same spiritual atmosphere, can neither fathom the depths of misery in which man can yet live, nor perceive alleviations in a blackness of despair that is all one shade to eyes like yours. Why, there are statistics to show——"

"To show anything on any side, according to the interpretation you want to place upon them.

Don't say 'statistics' to me; I've made 'em myself."

"Well, I haven't. But for every increase in wages wrenched as the prize of victory——"

"There's an increase in the cost of living that leaves the victory barren." "Suppose it does partly negative the material victory? It cannot lessen the spiritual gain in the stimulus to others to do likewise and in the challenge thrown out to men who think to justify the system. In other words, if you'll permit me, men like you make men like me. You are the type of man whose very conservatism makes radicals, reformers—cranks, if you like. It is your very satisfaction with the existing state of things that makes it intolerable to the others of us. The few who benefit by the system are not powerful enough with all their millions to make permanent the topsy-turvy rule of the many working for the few. It is you—the great body of such men as you, who make nothing not even spiritual satisfaction out of it, who have not even the excuse that you benefit by it, who make the system possible, who make its continuance probable—who will suffer some day as fully, as legitimately as its head and chief offenders for your indifference, for your positive conservatism, for your sins of omission and the stodgy mugwumpery——"

“But—Anthony Overman!”

The interruption came from Miss Incell; far off in the hollow in the forest she had seen the glow of the headlight on the coming train.

“You’ll pardon the indignation in my tone,” she continued lightly, “but if you had been petted and babied and given the centre of the stage as I have for six weeks, it would hurt your vanity a bit to find that the last few moments of your stay were to be taken up by a discussion that has nothing to do with the real problem—how Little Gap is going to get on without me.”

Overman turned quickly. The faint, far-off scream of the whistle came in on the soft, dark night.

“You see how she is spoiled, Overman,” said Morgan with a short laugh. “She is always in a temper when her story is not on the first page. Tell her quickly that life will be a waste after the train leaves to-night, and while you’re doing it I’ll go on and see if they did reserve the drawing room I wired for.”

Overman held out his hand and Miss Incell put hers in it, looking up at him with a face that was at once troubled, merry and vexed.

“You know,” he said slowly, “that I don’t believe life can be a waste so long as one can work.

But I needn't try to tell you, Jessie, how we'll miss you. You know that."

"But it's such a satisfaction to be told the things one knows," she said, a hysterical note in her gay voice. "It's only being told the things one doesn't know that's saddening."

"Well,"—he drew her hand within his arm and she found she could walk a step or two, relying upon the steady support he gave. "Imagine the forest, Jessie, without the trees, and the sky without the stars, and the kitchen as it would be without Hilma in it, and the day without an evening—you'll see then what life looks to me after you are gone."

She waited a moment as though half-doubtingly for something expected, half-hopefully to prolong the satisfaction his words were to her.

"But," she began as he remained silent, "there are still the poor whom ye have always with you."

There was an appeal in her voice, despite its facetious attempt, that she could not hide.

"You wouldn't rob me of everything, would you, all at once?" he demanded a deeper question in his voice than in the words.

She did not answer immediately, and the shrieking whistle again filled in the pause.

"Yes," she said suddenly, "yes, I would. I'd

rob you of everything till you came to realize how absurd it is of you to stay buried up here. Come down to the city and work for your ideas, Anthony Overman. There's infinitely more misery there if that's what you enjoy, and you can be as great a crank there as here."

"You tempt me," he laughed.

"I wish I could," she said with sudden sincerity. "I—personally am not satisfied to lose sight of you. One doesn't make friends so often that one can afford to let them go. You're the first 'subject' of mine that turned out to be a human being—and you're not very human, Anthony. Come down—do—will you? I—want you to."

"Thank you. I may."

"You say that as though I were the veriest stranger to whom politeness is due," she cried angrily withdrawing her hand.

"No," he answered, holding her elbow in the hollow of his hand as she turned toward the station, "no, I say it, as I say everything I do to you, with all my heart."

"Then you will come?"

"Wait," he said gently, "till you have got back to your old environment. Perhaps you'll see then how badly I might fit in there and how—little you really want me."

"You have no right whatever to doubt me," she said resentingly.

The train came crashing then into the little station. Morgan helped Miss Incell up the step and she stood there, her hand in Hilma's, the high platform permitting them to stand on a level.

"Good-bye, Democrat," Morgan held out his hand which Overman grasped. "You'll remember that you've a pull with the *Inquirer*, won't you, that the office is in your debt for all you've done for Miss Incell?"

"No, we're in the office's debt for the loan of her, Hilma, Donaghey and I," he said, and then while the others were saying good-bye, he turned to Miss Incell. "Good-bye. I wonder whether you'd ever care to write to me? No one but yourself could know what a letter from you would mean to me. Will you—Jessie?"

A sudden, hopeful thaw melted her displeasure and as the train pulled out she was waving her hand gayly at the little colony on the platform.

"The fellow's actually got brains," Morgan said, as he followed her into the car. "If he weren't such an ass and didn't take himself so seriously he might make use of all he's read and thought out for himself."

“Indeed!” Miss Incell lifted her brows superciliously. “Did you ever know a little reporter who failed to patronize the big man he runs up against? It’s one of the perennial farces of the profession, isn’t it?”

CHAPTER VIII

TO be able to work and to love one's work—the zest of life came back to Jessie Incell at sight of her desk. All her old fondness for her profession revived in the familiar atmosphere of hurry, of interest, of happenings, of possibilities. All her old poise and self-confidence returned while she gossiped for half an afternoon with the "boys." She heard with such eager attention as only the journalist gives of the doings and sayings of people in whom personally she had not the smallest interest. She listened to the inside histories that had been playing themselves in her absence. She delved into the politics of the office itself. She demanded the news—all of it, the suppressed items, the reasons for printing or suppressing—everything that would not have escaped her had she been in town; she wanted it all with an appetite for it that newsgathering alone gives. And then she commented impertinently upon the personal peculiarities of the staff, noting a change here or an emphasis there in manner, speech or costume.

She took good-naturedly the chaff she merited in return and served Little Gap up piecemeal—the doctor, the postmaster, the station-agent; the curious communities that have been attracted by the spot, as though it possessed some peculiar

quality with which to magnetize the unbalanced. She told them of the sect that sees the devil in speech; of the tiny fraternity that believes Satan dwells in the garments put on after his first appearance on earth, and shuns clothing accordingly; she described those who have fasted forty days—"And my friend Donaghey's one of them," she cried; and exclaimed at those who prayed themselves to death—"And Hilma, the blessed, very nearly was one of them!"

"In fact," she went on more lightly, "there's something in the air up yonder that nourishes notions till they become fads; that feeds fads till they become hobbies; and stimulates hobbies till they seem holy. No one is quite sane up there. If he were he'd be clapped quick into an asylum—so mad sanity appears when all the world's lunny."

"It's true," Morgan corroborated, strolling out from his desk in the corner, "Miss Incell herself had her hallucinations up there. And I had to humor her as madness always cheekily expects to be humored."

"For instance?" Miss Incell swung round in her chair and faced him challengingly.

"For instance, she thought she was in love with —" A burning flush swept over her face.

"—with Nature," Morgan laughed. "She

fancied she liked living close to earth—and the bugs and beetles thereof. She lost her sense of values and forgot the significance of a scoop. She became indifferent to the art of eating and the joys of the hot-water pipe. She played, like another queen who was the yellow journalist of her day, at idyl-making, and if I hadn't gone up and rescued her she'd have been taking herself as seriously as——”

“As Mr. Morgan does his first little desk position,” she interrupted rising. “Good-bye, if that's all the news.”

Morgan opened the door for her and helped her to the elevator.

“Won't you let me take you home?” he asked.

“No—thank you. 'Tisn't a bit necessary. And who'd take the desk?”

“Anybody. Let me come. You owe me something, you know, for withholding my hand. I could have delivered you and—your hallucination to the mercies of the shop.”

“Why didn't you?” she demanded hardily.

“You know why—because I don't dare displease you. And besides—the hallucination won't last down here in the atmosphere of real things. And after it's all gone——”

“What then?”

“Don't be so cruel. What good will it do you

to make me say it now? You're not ready to listen. That fellow up there has got you hypnotized so that you——"

"Do you know," she said with sudden briskness, "I believe Little Gap has affected you, too."

"No, it isn't Little Gap. I had this—this bit of madness in me long before I went up there, and Jessie——"

"Then it's sure to be cured, if you're only patient. Sanity dwells at the sea-level, you know. Good-bye."

She stepped into the elevator and smiled up at him as it descended.

But the smile left her face as she walked slowly along with her crutch. She had a tiny apartment very near the office, and she was the exception to the rule of tenants there for her landlady served her meals. But she had known Mrs. Connor for years, had boarded with her ever since the old Irish woman left the strenuous life of the tub for the more genteel occupation of keeping an apartment house. She had encouraged her in her aspirations and helped her to fill the new place; consequently she occupied a position in the house and in Mrs. Connor's heart that would have been hers, even had she lacked a certain taking way of seeking the human being behind the greatest formalist.

And Mrs. Connor was very human despite the bloodless calling she had chosen. She loved to gossip as much as did Jessie Incell herself, and she basked in the reflected light which the young woman's flimsy journalistic fame shed upon her place. There were times when she seemed to be on the point of exploding with the ostentatious secrecy she felt called upon to maintain in Jessie's behalf. "Wild horses couldn't get me to tell ye," she would declare to the caller who inquired whether Miss Incell was in town. She deplored and detested the opposition newspaper, and the scandalous inferences she permitted one to draw from her nods and winks and shrugs, concerning the character of any other prominent woman journalist, gave cause for relief that she hadn't told all she knew. On the morning after Miss Incell had achieved some sensational story Mrs. Connor walked the earth with the step of a conqueror. She bullied the one person on earth of whom she stood in awe—her butcher—and she volunteered to the man who kept the news-stand on the corner unpublished details, largely fictitious, concerning the *Inquirer's* featured story of the day. On the days when the prima donna of a rival office startled the journalistic world Mrs. Connor tied up her head and sat brooding over the kitchen fire. On those days her eyes always

pained so that she was unable to read, and Heaven pity the unfortunate neighbor who volunteered any information! If Jessie did not come home to dinner on time Mrs. Connor's lugubriousness became funereal; she never told what she anticipated in these crises, but the awful nature of her forebodings was plain to the housemaids. The only thing that could rouse her from her indisposition was the final arrival of Miss Incell, who was accustomed to being received on such occasions with mammoth sighs and groans and a countenance of such stony resignation as nothing on earth could lighten—except an attempt at making the supposedly miserable maiden comfortable bodily.

"Just a cup of tay for ye th' night, Miss Jessie," she would coax in a lachrymose tremolo, "ye must just eat something, child. It's your duty."

"But I'm hungry," Miss Incell might protest, her appetite unaffected by the supposititious calamity. "I want a chop nicely broiled. I want an artichoke, even if it is late, with that cold, soft creamy mayonnaise you make. And I want——"

"Ye shall have 'em—ye shall have 'em!" Mrs. Connor cried then almost hysterical at the thought of such Spartan concealment of suffering.

And she would totter downstairs to work for the beaten journalist and serve her with her own fat, capable hand; and she had been known to join

her toward the end of the famous little dinner in a glass of claret, over which she would forget her tenant's defeat and remember all her own triumphs.

"Ye were speakin' of Driscoll now who owns the *Tribunal*." Mrs. Connor loved to lose herself in reminiscence and grasped at the opportunity offered by a familiar name. "Jim Driscoll, is it? I cud 'a had him. My! Long ago, before he knew the differ between a scoop and a bate he was afther me. 'Bridget', he used t' say (I'd be standin' at the tub an' he'd come noseyin' round) 'Bridget, whin'll ye have me?' 'Whin ye can make as much money as I can by honest wurruk, ye lazy bones. Till then off wid ye!'"

"And is't Baumfelder the rich doctor was up t' see ye th' avenin'? I mind his father, the peddler. I cud 'a had him. Oh, many's the time he's said, 'Bridget, I'll change my religion for ye.' 'Well, I wouldn't do as much for ye,' says I, 'an' 'tain't much I'd think of a man who'd deny his God for a woman's pretty face.' . . . I was pretty in thim days, Miss Jessie, I swear t' ye. A complexion th' likes of which ye don't see these days whin women are playing the man and min are carin' for thimselves like women. Ropes of hair, a good stout lot of it I had, an' a merry eye an' a light heart and such power to rub in my arms and

willingness in my soul as I'd give a lot t' see in that jade Jenny as does my washin'. No China laundry for me. I nivver could bear thim Chinese, th' opium smokin' lot! Dye' mind that story in yis-tiddah's news section about the removal of Chinatown an' th' property, blocks an' blocks of it, a man named Horton owns there? Well—I cud 'a had him. Oh yes! He used to be the best o' th' lot an' he had a cigar stand down on Montgomery street years before th' *Inquirer* moved down there. Th' best o' th' lot, Miss Jessie, I'm tellin' ye——”

“Except Mr. Connor, of course,” interpolated Miss Incell.

“Except Misther Connor,” agreed his widow solemnly.

For whatever liberties she permitted herself with other men's names—a fashion she had picked up in the Bohemia which Miss Incell had brought to her doorsteps—she invariably referred to her late husband, for whom she had worked all her life, with the gentlemanly prefix.

But there came a day when Mrs. Connor went up to Miss Incell's room for a suggestion about dinner and found that young woman sitting looking wistfully out of the window, her idle pen in her hand and a sheet of closely written paper quite dry on the desk before her: all the symptoms, her

sympathetic landlady fancied, most appropriate to defeat.

Mrs. Connor's conscience smote her—she had taken advantage of Miss Incell's absence to revel in an easy, merely dilettante interest in newspapers, and so was unaware of the specific misery that demanded consolation. Still, like other people more vitally concerned with journalism, the old Irishwoman was not one to acknowledge a remissness; so thoroughly imbued was she with the spirit of the craft that she too believed anything excusable except an excuse.

"For my own part, Miss Jessie," she began this evening with elephantine subtlety, "I didn't think much of th' story th' *Tribunal* brags so much about. Now would ye call it good newspaper policy to print a thing like that? . . . What say?"

"I really don't know, Mrs. Connor," Jessie said rousing herself from abstraction. "I—I haven't begun to read the papers closely yet."

"No? . . . No?" Mrs. Connor wiped her hands with her apron. They were not wet, but they had been so often at critical times during her life and the habit recurred when she was perplexed.

Her face with its hardened ruddiness, a sort of fossilized blush, all that remained of the delicacy of skin she boasted, turned like Miss Incell's to-

ward the window. But the light that came from there revealed only the girl's unnatural dejection; not the cause of it.

Below Jessie Incell's high window, the most beautiful bay in the world, lapped the hilly town. It spread out beneath a high, clear sky in large, gracious curves, a roomy wide expanse of sheen and softness. Its islands lay relaxed upon its generous bosom. Its shipping spread roomily, its masts a light fringe of commerce about the city's skirts. The passing ferryboats seemed to emphasize its largeness instead of diminishing it. Off to the north the dry hills of late summer rose soft and round, huddled like gigantic deer in brown-gold masses. To the east twinkled the friendly lights of other towns rambling unconstrained along the stretches of the bay. And out to the west in the hazy golden glimmer of the Gate the bay merged into the ocean and the ocean became bay, and the sinking sun, shedding a ceremonious splendor over the scene, played priest over the marriage of the waters.

Mrs. Connor's eyes looked upon it as they had for fifty years, taking in all the little of it they had ever been capable of containing.

Miss Incell gazed upon it and saw not a single outline of that expanse of purity and peace, which had so often lent consolation when she was weary.

"Does yer fut hurt ye, Miss Jessie?" Mrs. Connor dropped the indirection of her post-scrubbing days; she turned her back on the glory outside striving to fathom the trouble within.

"I don't think it's my foot, Mrs. Connor." Miss Incell's surprised laugh ended abruptly without the trail of chuckles "like bubbles of clean suds dripping from the sheets" Mrs. Connor was wont to say. "Perhaps it is, though. I wish—I do wish it were. No—the trouble with me is—that I have got an hallucination. Dean Morgan's right," she added with a sigh.

Mrs. Connor looked wary. Words were seldom what they seemed and a disinclination to be laughed at was one of her acquired journalistic traits.

"That young man's got the swelled head," she said at last grimly. "It's a desk position that's done it. Just because he's managing editor——"

"Just assistant city editor, Mrs. C."

"'Tis what I say. They can't stand carryin' a green pencil."

"Blue," said Jessie absently.

Mrs. Connor looked annoyed. Technical accuracy she held to be the vice of pedants and she was still unenlightened as to her young friend's ailment. She had turned to go, her mission un-

accomplished, when Miss Incell rose and called to her.

"Mrs. Connor," she said putting her hands upon the landlady's fat shoulders, steady and broad like bridges of steel, "you've told me often of the others—the men you could have had, you know—but never anything really of the one you did take. Come now, tell me—you won't mind telling me, not for publication, you know, but merely as an evidence of good faith, and relying on mine—tell me about Mr. Connor."

The landlady's clear old eye wandered. Her fat, uncorseted breast heaved and she rubbed her arms and her forehead vigorously with her apron, freeing herself uncomfortably from the young woman's direct gaze.

"Misther Connor," she said at length with dignity, "was a gintleman. All th' days of me life I'll mourn his loss. He was wan of nature's noblemin, Miss Jessie."

"Of course, of course," said Miss Incell soothingly. Some literary experience had taught her what excellent leverage there is in the laudatory preface.

"Nivver a man was his akel in good-nathur, in contentedness of spirit, in—in puttin' up with things."

"Yes. . . . But?"

"But he was a divvle if iver there was wan! Mind that. Whin he was in liquor—an' pity knows whin he wasn't—he'd lay hands on—on the wan he owed most to. An' he wouldn't wurruk. He hated wurruk like the divvle hates holy wather. Job afther job he'd lose an' me at th' tub, an th' bye—'twas th' only wan we iver had Miss Jessie—down sick an' needin' my care, whin in Dinnis rolls bilin' dhrunk. . . ."

Her voice had become uncertain and faded gradually into stillness. She stood looking out contemplatively at the view which had changed so little since the day she had borne and buried her misery, shaking her head slowly, continuing her conjugal history in her thoughts, unconscious for the moment that she had given voice to them,

Miss Incell waited. She was a gifted interviewer, finely susceptible to atmosphere. The lights burned brighter across the bay and the ferry-boats stood out on the softly blackening water like far-sailing glow-worms.

"But in spite of it all——" The suggestion was gently sympathetic, tentative, appealing.

"In spite of it all," Mrs. Connor shook herself out of the past into the unrealities she had builded for the comfort of the present, "in spite of it there nivver was anny man in th' world like Mither Connor."

"Of course not." Not half the heartiness in Miss Incell's tone was ironical. "And as for the men we could have had——"

"Those we cud' a had, Miss Jessie, lumped altogether ain't worth wan hair o' the' head o' th' man we ha' married an' lived with, an'—an' loved."

The landlady's voice fell as though she feared a mocking echo. The echoes of this odd little apartment were apt to be mocking, and sentiment usually shrank in corners while cynicism stalked about like a masterful man in his own house. But in the dusk of this particular evening and in the thoughtful pose of the girl who had seated herself at her desk again something uncommon lurked that stirred the old Irishwoman.

"Miss Jessie," she whispered stertorously, "ye're not thinkin' of marryin' that mon Morgan? Don't marry a newspaperman, don't, dear. I used t' wash for wan an' I had t' write his bill in indelible ink on his cuff an' sind it t' th' opposition paper before he'd pay it. An' they say whin they're dhrunk, they're not only th' divvle—which is what all min are dhrunk—but him with smartness grafted on t' him. It ain't Morgan?"

"No—no, Mrs. Connor," Jessie answered hurriedly. "I—I don't suppose I'll ever marry. Women can't marry an hallucination."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Mrs. Connor with vague encouragement, "I cud' a had a policeman, an' a figure like you now, Miss Jessie, with all your writin' an' your name an' that, might grace anny position. Min are min, an' in America . . . Come now, what should I send ye for dinner?"

"Not much to-night—no, really. Up in the country I got out of the habit of eating heartily in the evening."

Mrs. Connor sniffed contemptuously.

"And besides—I have a letter to write," Jessie added.

"What's that?" The landlady, turned tyrannical at the sight of weakness, pointed with a thick finger, stubbed by years of close association with corrugated zinc. "Ye're not workin' yet?" It was a pose of Mrs. Connor's to revile Miss Incell's work which secretly she gloried in.

"That?" Jessie looked at the pages toward which Mrs. Connor's accusing finger pointed.

"Yes, that writin.' That iverlastin' writin'!" The distrust of the Dark Ages dwelt in Mrs. Connor's tone; she looked as though she would have liked to cross herself.

"Oh, that is merely one of the letters that are never mailed, Mrs. Connor. Born to blush inkly unseen, you know. You have to write just so

many of that kind during your life. They seem to be an utter waste of time and copy but—they serve a purpose. For till you see what you think you think in black and white, written by your own pen, you can't know whether you're entitled to any self-respect or not—you know."

Mrs. Connor didn't know, but she did know that no practical journalist ever admits that he doesn't know; and she had acquired what she considered the virtues of the profession, if nothing else. So she gathered up Miss Incell's full waste basket and was about to leave when her eye fell again upon the closely written pages.

"Then shall I take the letther down wid th' rest of th' rubbish?" she asked, convinced that in that letter lay the cause of the girl's strange behavior.

"N—no, thank you. They don't mail un-mailable letters, Mrs. Connor, but they don't always destroy them—either. They're good to keep, for by rereading them you get whipped back in line. And the man who made the conventions knew mighty well what he was about. . . . Good-night."

CHAPTER IX

MISS INCELL'S landlady felt her distrust of "all writin'," and the letter in particular which had lain on the young woman's table, justified when the upstairs maid brought down an untouched tray of eatables, with the report that "Mith Jetthie wath buthy reading a long letter the had written to herthelf, and the'th not at home to anybody if anybody callth."

But the letter Miss Incell had written to herself began "Dear Anthony Overman" and was still unsigned. And between the opening and the closing lay all Jessie Incell would have liked to say and all she dared not, for fear of incurring her own grave displeasure; no light thing in a young woman possessing her talent for ridicule. She had begun the letter in good faith. But as she progressed an occasional phrase or expression had raised a question in her mind, which she had resolved to consider by and by. And the very possibility of altering, toning down and revising later had given an unstability to the composition which became an unreality as she wrote on, yielding to the temptation of full expression and postponing any mental debate as to advisability or propriety. So that the document, begun reasonably, had become a fanciful thing before long

whose very impossibility as a communication from herself to Overman led her on to still greater improbabilities, till at last she was playing consciously with fiction, but fiction she was tempted to make fact.

"I have just got home after my first appearance at the office," she wrote. "Not to go to work yet, but to say 'How do you do' to the boys, to learn all the news and to yield again to the preoccupation of that environment which, according to you, was so speedily to wean me from the friends I left behind me.

"It hasn't—as this letter may indicate. In fact—in fact, Anthony Overman, I am distinctly lonely as I sit here looking out of my high window over the bay. I miss Hilma and Will Donaghey, the queer, lovable, cross-grained fellow, and you. I miss a certain poise there used to be of clean, simple, worth-while living up in the Sierras. This last is a delusion of course. I have merely been exposed to the Renunciant contagion and am suffering from a slight attack of 'crankiness.' Real living and working will cure that quickly.

"And this is one reason why I want you to come down and try the same cure. At least, I believe this is one of the reasons. Another is that it seems to me most of what I miss of the Little Gap life is—you, Anthony.

"Now, why in the world of commonsense may not a woman say as much to a man? If you were a woman or I a man, I should not hesitate to ask you to come down to San Francisco to visit me. In either case we'd be two men, you and I, or two women living together in my dear little apartment and I'd remake acquaintance with the dirty, straggling, beautiful town I am so fond of, experiencing an added pleasure because you were seeing and feeling what I see and feel. We'd go to work together on the paper and rest together and play together after we got through digging. You'd moderate my passion for scoops, which takes me, careless of everything else, into a world where I can ignore people to the verge of forgetting that they may be human. I'd be excellent for you, too; a corrective of crankism, an antidote to dreams, an example of practical worldly wisdom. We'd quarrel desperately, I suppose, but that too, I think, would be very good for you. It would be better for you to violently hate a single, concrete human being than to dwell up there in lofty love for the whole race, without really knowing one of us. No, you don't—not even Hilma and Donaghey.

"You don't know anybody, Anthony. You don't know me. You won't know me, nor yourself. You are satisfied to make me your close friend for the weeks we were together, and are

satisfied now to let us drift apart. What sort of friendship is that? Your eyes are clogged with theories. I don't care how fine they are or how true; they're not worth a day of actual living.

"Are you missing me—a bit, O Buddha? Are you lonely—a bit? Do you regret that we two are not of the same sex, or altogether different conventions, so that we might be companions unhindered, unquestioned—that at least, you might come down to see me (if you obstinately persist in still living up in the hills) or that I might run up to you when I had a day or so off and wanted to listen to you talk?

"Tell me, isn't there something, some little thing gone out of the forest and the mountains and the sky and the little log cottage and—your heart, Anthony? Can you really let me go as easy as this? If you were any other sort of man I'd know and understand the connection between your actions and your thoughts. But with that fanatic purpose of yours to drive you on and lift you, in a sense, above the necessities that would conquer another, a mere human man—I don't know—I don't know.

"All I know is—I want you, Anthony. I long for you—I crave the sound of your voice and the look of your clear eyes. And at times—like this minute, this quick, fleeting, fleeting minute—I

know you want me, too, that you miss your friend, that you too feel the bond that has grown between us, a bond that you'd not see broken. I know that this feeling that moves me so strongly is but the answering sympathetic impulse of your own longing far off there, yonder, high on the hills.

"And then, all at once, that sureness leaves me. And I hate you, Anthony Overman, for waking a feeling of which you are unworthy."

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As she read them over her own words moved her as the writing of them had hardly done. With the last paragraph a paroxysm of anger and humiliation shook her and she seized the page intending to tear it to pieces. But she caught sight then on the lower leaf of the fanciful picture of a life in common which her own pen had created, and she throbbed with tenderness for her imagination's offspring.

"No," she said, as though there were something sentient in the letter that could understand. "I'll put you away. They say that everybody is some sort of fool that nobody dreams of. It will be good for me to have this thing where I can get at it and convince myself by ocular demonstration that I'm not to be trusted. My thoughts have actually become incomplete to me unless I can talk or write them to him! Well, when my case

comes up in court—when I'm arrested for choking that lipping maid to death—the police, rum-maging through my things, will come across this letter, and some smart girl reporter, who's on flirting terms with the Chief, will publish it as her scoop. And everybody (deceitfully ignoring his own skeleton weakness, yet undiscovered) will say, 'You wouldn't have believed it of her, would you? And she seemed to have such commonsense, too!' Well—here's for a commonsense letter that intends to be mailed. I wonder am I always to write two versions to that man every time an epistolary mood seizes me!"

She pulled her blotter viciously toward her and began again to write:

"My Dear Mr. Overman,

I write to inform you that no sudden and surprising change has manifested itself in me or in my feelings by the drop from an elevation to the sea level, and the passage of seventy-two hours. I still hope that we shall continue our friendship and that you care for this, too. I still believe that you make a mistake in living off in the mountains making a Renunciant community of yourself, at the risk of becoming a greater crank even than you are now, and of some day providing copy for some yellow woman journalist's article, beside which Jessie Incell's expose of Brother Ariel Senn will seem innocuous.

"It really is not good for man to be alone, Anthony. Even rubbing up against the world is not enough to smooth out all the kinks of egotism in strong individualities. I pray you come to the rescue of your present self and lift Anthony Overman out of the danger that threatens. I see a possible future for you that at once saddens and amuses me. So, come down, O Man, from thy heights to where mere mortals dwell at the sea level. I know you intend to some day, but now's the day. Come down and go to work on the *Inquirer*. Morgan says a position is waiting for you. Why deny yourself the experience? One can always retire in disgust at the end, instead of the beginning of life. I am writing to Hilma by this mail, impressing it upon the dear conscientious little soul that it is her duty to make you so miserable and uncomfortable up there that you'll just have to give up your role of hermit.

"I am— strange to say, still

Your friend, at the sea level as well as
up in the mountains,

Jessie Incell."

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She sealed and stamped this in a thoroughly business-like manner and then wrote Hilma a few lines telling her how quickly her ankle was gaining strength, how comparatively little she used her pretty crutch, and how considerate the office had been in creating a position where one had nothing to do but to re-write other people's copy, till she

should be well enough to go about town again. She reminded Hilma of her promise to come down to pay her a visit before winter and the rains set in, and she wound up with a querulously tender paragraph in which she accused the Swedish girl of spoiling her by all her tender ministrations, so that she felt like a little child compelled for the first time to go to sleep alone.

And she did set about her preparations for bed in a haphazard, undecided sort of way, lingering long at the open window in intervals of undressing, which she accomplished by starlight, her eyes on the black, soft stretch of the bay, spangled now by lights that glowed and sparkled aggressively, as though gaining strength from the defeat of day. And at the very last, when she had laid herself down on her slim couch, she rose again in the dark and shamefacedly pulled open the drawer of her desk to lay her hand gently and caressingly upon the letter which she had declared unmailable; and she went back to bed as though she had found loving comfort in its contact.

By day though Miss Incell sternly refused to countenance any nonsense or to recognize herself in a sentimental damosel who had time for dreams and desires. She got up early. Below her the bay was wrapped in fog and the hoarse whistles of the tugs and sirens were complaining like over-

worked things with a grievance, a touch of bronchitis due to the damp, and an alcoholic tendency that might be attributed to the same cause. She buttoned herself determinedly into her jacket, set her hat severely upon her head in the correcting manner with which she had seen mothers add a dignifying touch of discipline to the perfunctory washing and dressing of their children and, with the lisping maid's help, she got down the long flight of steps that led to the street. As she walked down the steep sidewalk, there was a steady, business-like swing to her cane that had nothing of the cripple in it. (She had discarded the crutch and it hung upon her wall like a warrior's sword when the fray is over—the simile was Morgan's). And she landed from a cable car at the office door feeling, in spite of her lagging foot, that she had never been away from her desk, that she never wanted to be, and that she had only dreamed she craved something her work could not give her.

But in a few days she found that she had got back only into the routine; not into the atmosphere she had left. She told herself pettishly, when she could no longer affect to ignore it, that the difference was owing to the nature of her present employment; that rewriting other people's stories was deadly drudgery and that when she should be able safely to walk without help of any kind and go

about her own business, she would find again all the interest and self-absorption in her work it had always had for her.

A letter that was lying upon her desk when she got home one evening disabused her of this impression. At sight of the postmark and the masculine dash of the address, she knew that it held the only story in the world that could really interest her now, and she locked the door before tearing the envelope open, feeling as keen a desire to be alone with it as though she feared someone might be watching her self-betrayal.

Yet when she had finished reading it, she sat still at the window, holding it in her hand and looking thoughtfully before her, quite composed. After all there was no necessity to lock the door, to lock her features, to lock up her emotions. No one dreamed of disturbing any of these, evidently. A letter like this warranted no such apprehension. She smiled scornfully as her eyes fell again to the sheet in her hand and she read once more,

“Dear Jessie,

Your letter gave me that familiar feeling of being tenderly laughed at, that I never experienced till I met you and that I know so well now. I see myself, after reading it, as a pompous owl of great pretense and no performance setting up to be a great deal better than my neighbors.

I am always ashamed both of the big pretense and the no performance, but not nearly so ashamed of these as I am delighted and thankful for your interest in me.

"There never was a lonelier fellow than myself, never one more thoroughly adrift from all human connection—which makes my altruistic pretenses all the funnier to you, no doubt, but which makes me most grateful for and prone to treasure every human tie that I am fortunate enough to make. You have many friends—which makes your adding me to the number a further proof of your generous nature. I have none—few—you. It is for this very reason, for the value your friendship is to me that I refrain from putting it to the test your goodness suggests. I am not fit to live in your world, Jessie. It would only trouble and perplex you to try to fit me into the environment that suits you so well.

"Thank you—and no. I cannot come to San Francisco to force upon you contrasts that might shake your confidence in your judgment of me. I cannot accept your kind offices with the *Inquirer*. There is nothing of the journalist about me—I should only weary your patience, be an indictment of your discernment.

"But I have no intention of remaining indefinitely up here. I shall wait till Donaghey is on his feet, till he can manage things alone for himself and Hilma and then I shall go back East—to work humbly, with no brass-band prospectus for my ideal, in any small, homely way that presents itself. I shall be no important, sensational

crank, believe me. The newspapers will not find me worth while, and a future Jessie Incell will never dream of making me the subject of her dissecting pen.

"It simply must be, though, that there is work for a man to do who has no other tie than that that binds him to humanity as a whole; who has no duty greater than the chance duty nearest him; who has no religion other than charity; who has always time to help; who feels a sense of brotherhood to misery, a longing to struggle with it, a desire to ease it that takes the place in him of passion for a wife, of protection for children, of ambition in society and religious devotion. The reason why there is so little real charity in the world is that the father cannot stop to heed the call—he is on his way to work; the mother is on her way to her home; the children are on their way to school. Even the sister of mercy is on her way to obey a regulation, to fulfill some order. And the warmer-hearted of the un-uniformed sisters buy with a coin the substitute for personal giving; as lukewarm patriots buy substitutes in time of war. I shall be on my way to meet just those whose need of me cries out to me—a humble enough, simple enough calling, isn't it? I must give time enough to work so that I shall not be a burden—no more; all the rest that I am or have is a debt that I owe to weak humanity, to weary and sick humanity. And every one that I can raise up will be another one to fight the system that has thrown them like refuse from a machine off into the gutter of life to die or to be washed away.

“ . . . After all, you are right, Jessie. I am a crank, a wearying one, a bore who never knows the place to deny himself, nor the time to desist. Forgive me. I never got a letter that carried with it so unmistakably the personality of the writer as this one of yours seems to. It bears your voice, your laugh, your pretty little ways. It brings you back so vividly that I must lift my head and stare at it to realize that you are not lying on the lounge yonder while I am talking to you. There is some excuse, perhaps, for the bore who rides his hobby madly in your presence, but he deserves not forgiveness who bores his helpless friend when he has him at his mercy—at the end of a letter. So do forgive me,

“Before I go back east—the date is not yet settled—may I come down to say good-bye to you?

“Believe me, faithfully your friend, to whom your letters carry the very sunshine of your presence,
Anthony Overman.”

Miss Incell shook her head bitterly. No—nothing here which she might not have read in anyone’s presence; nothing but the composed utterance of a self-contained man, a man who had measured his strength and spoke with absolute sincerity. Why, she might have opened this envelope before the whole staff assembled in the *Inquirer’s* local room! And yet when, just at this moment, someone knocked she started guiltily. She must have been contemplating the plan that

sprang complete from her mind when she opened the door to admit the lisping maid Lisbeth, for she hardly listened to the girl's question as to whether she needed anything more in the night, and spoke quickly.

"Yes, just one thing more, Lisbeth—can you write?"

"Me? You don't mean for the paper, Mith Jetthie! . . . Oh! juth plain handwriting . . . Oh, yeth. Thertainly."

"There's a newspaper story that I am going to do," Miss Incell said uncertainly and with an appearance of embarrassment that roused all the maid's curiosity, "and you can help me, if you will, by writing a line for me and addressing an envelope. Do you mind?"

Did Lisbeth mind? A gasping, incredulous joy filled her. She cherished a secret ambition that she had not confided to a soul. She felt that in herself were the desert and the capacity for acquiring just such a sensational notoriety of glory as surrounded Miss Incell with a fascinating halo.

She took from Jessie's hand a closely-written page and wrote at the bottom of it at the place pointed out to her these words under dictation: "Miss Incell is very ill. She wishes to see you." Then she addressed an envelope to Anthony Over-

man, Little Gap, California, and sealed and stamped it.

"And will my name be in the paper?" she asked in blissful agitation.

"No—we'll have pull enough to keep it out all right," Miss Incell said smiling, all unconscious that she had extinguished the light of a great hope. "And if you get out of the house and mail it, Lisbeth, before I can call you back, you shall have theatre tickets to any show in town.—Fly!"

And Lisbeth flew to mail the unmailable letter.

CHAPTER X

“THERE ’th a gentleman to thee you, Mith Jetthie.” Lisbeth’s face was a-dimple with delight and her round eyes shone significantly.

An answering signal, a flame of red swept over Miss Incell’s face and her eyes too shone significantly.

“Is it—” she whispered.

“Yeth. He told me to thay it wath Anthony Overman—it ’th the very thame name, Mith Jetthie!” she squealed.

“Tell me, what does he look like, Lisbeth—is he short?”

“Oh, no.”

“Dark?”

“No, but——”

“Dressed like a swell?”

“No.”

“Big black eyes? A squeaky voice? Narrow shoulders—Say, Lisbeth!”

“Why—no.”

“Ah—h! It can’t be the man. Tell him I’m not at home, Lisbeth.”

Every dimple went out of Lisbeth’s face which could not have expressed keener disappointment and amazement, had cold water been dashed upon it. Her eyes, which had beamed so expressively

when she entered gave a bewildered, resentful glance at the leading lady in journalism, whose humble, unacknowledged understudy she believed herself to be, and unwillingly she left the room closing the door sorrowfully behind her.

Miss Incell preserved her dignified demeanor just that long. Then she turned her flaming face to the cushions and buried it there. She dwelt for a second in the light of a land of desire fulfilled. Then another knock at the door brought her to her feet. But it was still Lisbeth.

"He wanted to know when you would be at home."

"And you told him?"

"I didn't know. I thaid I'd athk my aunt."

"Hum!" Miss Incell's shining eyes looked through the little maid with a glance that made Lisbeth feel uncomfortably unimportant. "Well—tell him I've just come in."

"Mith Jetthie!"

"Oh—all right. If you don't like that tell him I'm always at home evenings on—yes, to-day's Friday. He—he may know about the other man, you know."

"Yeth," said Lisbeth vaguely comforted.

At eight that evening Miss Incell walked for the first time since her accident, unaided by crutch or cane, into her parlor which was also her study and

dining-room, and there Overman was waiting for her. The soft folds of her only evening gown trailed flimsily behind her. Her trim little figure was most appropriately draped and she held herself as women do when prettily dressed, with a recognition of the carriage that finery obliges; a cult no woman needs to be taught. Through the modest décolletage of lace the warm tint of her throat gleamed softly, and she was conscious in every fibre of her body of being guilty of an absurd and unworthy action, in receiving such a caller in so pretentious a gown; all of which only made her hold her small head very high to still the acknowledgment of the justice of her self-indictment, and brought the blood warmly to her cheeks and lips and an added sparkle of excitement to her eyes.

The sight of him opposite in tweeds, his soft shirt with the low collar and flowing tie, his hat still in his hand marked the thought she was trying to escape, and at the same time sent an altogether feminine thrill of rejoicing through her, that he stood as straight and strong before her in this at least half-conventional dress as he had in the easier garments he wore when they first met.

"And you're not ill—I'm so glad," he said holding her hand and looking down upon her as upon something strange yet familiar, as though she were a re-discovery and a new one at the same

time. "I never knew you were beautiful—Jessie," he said slowly.

"I'm not—my gown may be. But I never knew you were gallant."

"I'm not, or I couldn't pay so clumsy a compliment. But it's good to see you looking so well and walking, too. . . . What does your letter mean, Jessie?"

His directness sent a shiver through her.

"It's—it's that silly Lisbeth's fault," she stammered. "I'll explain it all. Sit down first and tell me about Hilma and Donaghey. It seems months since I saw them. But you're not looking well, yourself. What is the matter? Is the world growing heavy, Anthony? Can't you settle all the doubts and distractions of humanity—theoretically and without getting thin and lanky? Or have you discovered, you great man, that you can't do it all with one hand tied behind you?"

"It isn't the world—" he laughed.

"But?"

"The flesh and the devil, I suppose. But I'm all right. So are they both up there. Hilma gave me a dozen messages. But she told me at last to forget all of them and remember only to bring you back with me that she might nurse you. I had told her you were ill. Your letter——"

"You ought to be grateful for it," she inter-

jected hurriedly and as pertly as possible, "for bringing you down to see me, even if it was all the maid's blunder. Let me see, what was in that silly letter?"

"The real beating of a human heart," he cried catching both her hands and holding them tight. "Jessie—you can't have forgotten a word of that letter; I didn't write it, I have only read it a few times, but it beats here against my heart like something animate."

A softness that was like a veil fell over her face and figure. She sat in silence for the barest second, then she withdrew her hands from his and walked away toward the window. Her step was sure. So was her voice when she spoke.

"Did it strike you that way?" she asked lightly. "I have often wondered how much of the writer the receiver himself puts into a letter. If you had read such a letter written by a girl you had never seen to some man, a friend of yours, what would you have thought of it? The thing was done, of course, as a literary speculation. I present the problem in a literary sense, you understand."

"And I am altogether unconcerned as to its literary sense.—Jessie——"

"That nonthenthical Lithbeth!" lisped Miss Incell imitating the luckless maid with a lightness and verve that seemed to increase with the vi-

brant emotion in Overman's voice. "The defect in her speech seems to be accompanied by another in her comprehension. She simply can't get things straight. She will come in answer to my bell though every time she does anything for me it's as forceless and indefinite as the way she talks. I said to her plainly—'Go to the desk and take out a note I've just written to Doctor Baumfelder. Write at the bottom of it that I'm not real well and that I want to see him.' Now, would you believe that little goose could mistake it for the long tirade, a mythical letter I had written to a mythical Anthony, just as a tentative literary effort—you know, sometimes I think I could write stories and—and yet——"

But he would not listen any longer.

"Oh, but you see," he cried, "you did write it Jessie Incell! You did feel it. You must have, or you couldn't have written like that. The Anthony worthy of such a letter may be mythical—I know no man who deserves it—but the girl—the girl is true, real, adorable! She——"

"The girl,"—her voice fluted with a gayety that swept like a starling over the roof of his earnestness and left him dazed behind and below, "the girl is ten times, a hundred times more mythical than the man. For she was a conscious myth. She could feel the nothingness of herself as she

wrote, and the less than nothingness of the flimsy soul—she didn't have. She was a lark, a caprice, a literary whim, the pen and ink shadow of a mood, a sort of legible blot shaken on a white paper by fancy, and just by chance crystallizing into words. And chance sent the wordy picture of that queer, unfeminine creature up to you. I'm amazed that she deceived you into taking her seriously for a moment—that silly, hysterical nonentity, with all her exaggeration, her sentimentality, her . . . Of course," she added glancing at him over her shoulder, "there was a basis of truth to work on. That's what helped the little fake to impose upon you, I suppose. You knew, of course, that another girl whose handwriting this freak imitated did feel a warm friendship for a man whom, even if he is an altruistic myth, she would be sincerely glad to see. And so I *am* glad, Anthony, to see you."

She turned from the window holding out a hand with the cheeriest, calmest cordiality.

He did not take it. So she did herself and sat down in the window seat, looking at the hand she held with interest, as though it were something new and of value.

He stood, intently looking down upon her as she sat there. There was something capricious, provoking about her very attitude, about the

buckled slipper bedded in the ruffled edge of her trailing gown; something altogether unlike any mood of herself as he had known her, something markedly, consciously, intentionally feminine, something subtle and evasive and intangible that made her seem strange to him yet did not repel him, whatever her desire.

"And so you repudiate the letter?" he demanded.

She looked up at him standing over her, a radiance of content in her face; then let her lids fall, shrugged her shoulders and lightly assented.

"Well—I am glad of it."

She almost started to her feet.

"For there is part of it which I, too, don't care to accept. I don't want to share your sex, Jessie. Nor would I have you share mine. I want——"

He stopped and looked down as if begging for pity from this gay girl, who seemed untouched by the thing that had so changed him he hardly knew himself.

"But you do want to come down to San Francisco, don't you? I do hope you will," she said in a quite friendly, patronizing voice.

"What should I come to San Francisco for?" he cried. "What should I change the whole course of my life for? Why should I turn my back on the things I intended to devote my whole

life to and but give to them only what's left over? Why should I put myself in a false position with myself and try to fit myself into a place that was not made for me nor for which I was intended? What for—what for—except for one thing!”

She put her hand to a pert little bow in her hair and patted it pleasantly. In her attitude there was gentle, polite attention, a distant patience that came to him, though he hardly realized it then, as the cold, sweet breath of a glacier. But he had lost command of his impressions; it was expression that he craved, that his whole being was bent upon, that would not be turned aside nor stifled.

“Look at me, Jessie, look at me—a fellow with no home, no place, no future, no friends, no position. With not even himself to give to the making of all these, for that self is vowed to other things—once, by will, but now, despite it, but still unalterably. A strayed idealist, an unballasted tramp, at war with society and with not even a theory that he dreams will correct it. A fellow that comes from nowhere and doesn't know where he is bound for. A credulous simpleton, too, or he wouldn't have been taken in by a Senn. A reformer without a party, a crank without a definitely besetting formula. If I had the world in my hands to-day, I might set the Single Tax in operation—another man's solution, not mine—and this fail-

ing, I could but do for the individual as I would to-day—give myself up individually to him!

“And yet this man you’ve made your friend—can you realize of what he is dreaming?—Of—love, of marriage! Oh, laugh Jessie, laugh at the presumptuous fool whose theories were not madder than is his practice! He must fall in love, this altruist who was to give himself and all he—hadn’t to the world. And if his passions had been stirred by the simplest, humblest creature, by that maid who opened the door, he would owe her apology, don’t you think? But no, he must love one who is farther from him than an heiress to millions would be, for she is a producer where he is not. She is a success where he is nothing; not even a failure for he has not even attempted. Though younger than he, she has made a position for herself. If—if he were to try for a station whence he might reach out hungering arms to her, he would owe the very fulcrum he’d place his lever against, to herself. And he a man—and she a girl! A pitiable figure—isn’t he—Jessie!”

“Yes.”

The low word came gently, with an impersonal sympathy. Miss Incell seemed to be listening patiently while her eyes were occupied in watching the pale bay beneath.

His hands fell to his side as though the word she

spoke had released a spring. He looked from the small, well-set head below his eyes to the wide, ocean fed water beyond. His face, older than his years and thin now and grave, settled slowly into heavily marked lines. And he stood looking out for a moment that was like a long, hard year to her. The palms of her hands bore the marks of her fingernails, but she sat still, waiting.

His voice was very gentle when he spoke again.

“I love you with all my soul, Jessie. I didn’t know what it was that took other men out of themselves and set their feet in strange paths they hadn’t willed to walk in, till you came up there. And I never knew what despair can wring man’s selfish soul till you left. The balm went out of the evening. The forest became hard and literal. It lost not only the gracious glamor your presence had given it, but the freshness and succouring strength it has had for me since, when a boy, I first became conscious of it. I fainted for lack of you, dear. I longed—I longed for you in shame, in agony of mind, in exultation. And the poorest fellow whose hopes never soared above his bed and food was not poorer than I—I with all my theories and plans and hopes!

“Then your letter came. You can see now why I read into it the thing that possessed me, that sat at table with me, that beckoned me out into

the woods and laughed at me and yet came back at night to lie down with me. You gave me only your bright, cheery friendship and I, like a vain fool, misunderstood. That's all. But I love you. And I don't regret it. And you must not. For it's a possession—this love of mine for you, dear—that makes me rich and, though unhappy, —happy. So . . .”

He held out his hand. But she lifted up her arms and pulled him down to her and, laying her cheek beside his, she sobbed,

“Why didn't you say it all—that night I left, when I was just—hungering for a word from you!”



“‘Why didn’t you say it all—that night I left, when I was just—hungering
for a word from you!’”

CHAPTER XI

WHERE'S Haydon?" asked the red-haired office-boy who had just come in from lunch.

As he spoke, he flipped a square of cardboard with his little finger: one of those printed blanks furnished the numerous people who wanted to see the editor, in order that they might classify themselves and save him the trouble.

"I'm looking for the city editor," he went on shrilly. "Man says assistant city won't do."

"Don't look," said Morgan, not troubling himself to glance up from the desk, while he stretched out his hand.

The red-haired boy's eyes measured his superior. He hesitated just an instant, then placed the card in Morgan's outstretched hand.

"I congratulate ye, Mr. Morgan," he said in the formal sing-song which he felt the occasion demanded. "Mr. Haydon was on the desk, though, when I went out to lunch. Pretty quick work!"

"Mr. Haydon," said Morgan with deliberation, "has got a—a leave of absence——"

"'Thout asking for it, huh?" grinned the boy.

"Get out of this, Jimmy, and send the gent in to me. And—you might take this with you."

The new city editor handed the boy half a dollar. "It's my day to treat. When you get to be city editor I'll expect as much from you. Tell Mr. McIntosh I'll see him. Confound him!" he added under his breath as he turned back to his desk.

But Morgan's antipathy for McIntosh, whom the paper's demagogic policy brought often to the office, was no secret. He detested the secretary of the labor union for being a labor union man, and secondly for being himself. All Morgan's theories of the unfitness of the masses for power and privilege jangled discordantly with the ideas of this representative of the working people; and all his personal distaste for slowness of body and literal, wooden seriousness crystallized at sight of the Scotchman, for whom all the world was divided into union and anti-union.

He stopped at the door surprised when he saw Morgan.

"I had told the boy especially that I wanted to see no representative," he said with a clear pronunciation of "r's" and a broad "a," which was all there was in his speech to prove his origin. "I have something to say to Mr. Haydon, the city editor, pairsonally."

Morgan rose with a courtesy that was utterly foreign to him in his journalistic dealings with

men. It was just his luck, he was exclaiming to himself, that the first caller at the city editor's desk after he had taken charge should be this man.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. McIntosh, now that you are here?" He placed a chair cordially. "The boys in the office are demoralized; they can't be taught evidently to deliver a message properly. Mr. Haydon is—under the weather this afternoon and——"

"I can wait till to-morrow;" McIntosh stood grimly ignoring the chair.

"And I really am afraid he'll not be on deck for some time. Now if there's anything I can do——"

"No.—No, thank ye. Mr. Haydon's not left the paper?" he asked suspiciously.

"Left the paper?" repeated Morgan as though he had not quite caught the words.

He marveled at Haydon's capacity for placating this man and getting news out of him; a capacity which he himself must develop if he did not want the office to draw invidious comparisons.

McIntosh sniffed dryly; a sophisticated sniff it was, signifying that the ways and wiles of journalism were not strange to him.

"I thought perhaps he might have quit," he

said sarcastically. "It make no difference. I could trust Haydon," he added lingeringly.

Haydon's successor cursed him within his heart. But he smiled blandly as he asked.

"And how do you know you can't trust me, Mr. McIntosh?"

"I don't," replied the labor union secretary. "But neither do I."

"You've come to a decision about whether to declare a strike or not?" asked Morgan, coming to a decision himself that he must strike now or his visitor and his opportunity might be gone before he could.

McIntosh rubbed his sandy side-whiskers, while he looked at Morgan out of narrowed, non-committal gray eyes.

"Ah've no authority," he said cannily, "to divulge the secrets of the union."

"No—no, of course not." Morgan said to himself that nothing would delight him more than to take labor's representative and choke the truth out of him.

"The union," said McIntosh didactically, "believes in treating all the newspapers alike. The cause of labor"—Morgan gritted his teeth. "Eh? The great cause which I have the honor to represent is no light thing to lend itself to unscrupulous purposes."

"I agree with you, Mr. McIntosh, thoroughly," declared Morgan. "But the *Inquirer* has been a steadfast friend to labor and——"

"And why not?" demanded McIntosh quickly. "It lives by the nickels of the working class."

"And the working class," rejoined Morgan angrily, "gets at least five cents' worth for every nickel invested."

McIntosh stared at him a moment.

"Na doubt," he said rising slowly, "na doubt. Ah'll bid ye good-day, sir, and I hope I haven't taken up too much of your valuable time."

"Good-day—not at all," said Morgan with an emphasis that did not deceive his visitor.

The memory of his first detail came back to the newspaperman. He had not wanted anything as he wanted this man's confidence, since that far-off first day of trial. But while he stood hesitating yet helpless, McIntosh himself opened the door and brushed against a man just about to knock.

"Why if it isn't Mr. Overmon," he exclaimed. "Are ye on the *Inquirer*, too? Well, well—if I had known——"

Morgan caught at a straw. "You know Overman?" he cried.

McIntosh smiled dryly. "Not as a reporter," he said, "as a human being. I know pairsonally

of the boys he has sent to the Refuge Home, for my brother's carpenter there and has told me of it."

"Good!" Morgan took Overman's arm, which he pressed fondly as well as significantly. "Come in, Overman. Perhaps you can persuade Mr. McIntosh that the paper's his very good friend. Take a seat—take a seat—I'm going out to see Baxter and you can have the place to yourselves." He made delightedly for the door.

"Excuse me, Mr. Morgan," Overman said trying to detain him, "I wanted to explain to Mr. Haydon, who sent me out to see the Reverend Grant MacMillan, what a pitiful——"

"Never mind that"; Morgan waved all lesser matters aside. "I'll 'tend to Haydon's end of it. Convince McIntosh that the *Inquirer* is to be trusted—that's your detail."

He shut the door upon them and walked out into the local room.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a newspaper crown," commented the new assistant city editor as Morgan passed his desk.

"I wouldn't care if the uneasy lies were efficacious," Morgan laughed sitting sideways upon his desk.

The assistant city editor looked up with quizzing sympathy. He was a man about fifty, stout,

pale, with a heavy mustache and a hopeless droop to his broad shoulders. He knew no elation over his new position. He had been assistant city editor half a dozen times before. He had been assistant Sunday editor and assistant night editor. He was always assistant-something or other, yet he never attained the office to which his deputyship was the natural stepping-stone. Chiefs died, resigned, or were deposed, but chieftainship was not for Baxter. Some younger man, some new man, some unknown man was invariably put over his head. And he had borne the insult so long that neither he nor the office considered it such any longer. He was a hopeless man, a pessimist, of course, but he had grown to identify his misfortune with an abstract malice of Fate's, and he never made an enemy of his new superior, for the honest belief he had that the new man was but the blameless instrument of the cruel goddess. He looked at Morgan now with a smile that had no malice in it.

"It was beastly luck, Dean, that your first visitor should be McIntosh."

"Beastly?" exclaimed Morgan. "You weakly understate, Baxter. The only man in town before whom I didn't dare to flaunt my new title!"

Baxter laughed quietly. When he laughed his pallid face became like a basin of dough,

dimpled and wrinkled by the fermenting joke below.

"Was he very nasty?" he chuckled.

"I just yearned to break his face. How do you suppose Haydon managed him?"

Baxter shrugged his big, hopeless shoulders beneath the dirty white of his shirt-sleeves.

"Did you give him up?" he asked.

"I passed him over to Overman. God sent Overman in at the very crisis. I believe He desires that I remain city editor of the *Inquirer*. It suits His editorial policy evidently. . . . I say, what's this about a Refuge Home and boys and Overman and the rest of it."

Baxter spat leisurely; he was chewing.

"Didn't know you'd heard that 'God-sent Overman.' It's what the boys call him," he went on in answer to a negative gesture of Morgan's.

"Why?"

"Because he was sent to rescue Miss Incell from marrying—a certain newspaper man."

Morgan laughed, and flushed.

"Bah!" he said good-naturedly, "there's nothing in that. The fellow amuses her, keeps her interested. He's such an out-and-out crank."

"That's what has taken him to the Refuge Home. He picks up kids on the street when they're dirty enough, vile enough, wretched enough to suit

his taste—they get to like their misery highly spiced, these cranks, in the same way that connoisseurs like rotten cheese, you know. He has 'em washed, the kids, and fed and dressed and then sends 'em off for a term of years to various institutions. The term varies according to how much he's got left over from last pay-day. Haydon gave him the misery details always; sort of recognition, I suppose, of his ex-officio character. He's just been sent out to see the Reverend Grant MacMillan, who has landed at the city jail after a spree once too often. This time he's held for theft. He steals, you know, when he's full."

"Good story!"

"Yep. MacMillan wouldn't see anybody. The city hall man telephoned in that the parson sits shivering in his cell and positively won't see one of the fellows out there. So Haydon sent Overman out."

Morgan stared.

"You mean you don't know 'God-sent Overman' in the role of a crack-a-jack," Baxter said translating the other's attitude. "No—he may not have a record for scoops, but he's go-od—with a circumflex accent, as mothers say of their ugly daughters, you know. But Haydon just sent Overman out blind, hoping he'd hit the trail with blind luck. He didn't dare confide in him

what he hoped of him—for good and sufficient reasons. What did he get?”

“Don’t know. I wouldn’t listen to him when he started to tell me; just pushed him and McIntosh into each other’s arms and left the rest to God,” said Morgan with that calm, unspecialized irreverence that often characterized his informal allusions to Deity. “There they come now. Pray for me, Baxter. You’ll be city editor if I’m scooped on this strike business.”

“Not I.” Baxter grinned sardonically. “Some other fellow that’s never handled a blue pencil in all his life.”

“Do you mean to insinuate, sir!” roared Morgan bombastically.

He waved a farewell to McIntosh, who seemed anxious to hurry away, and watched him eagerly till he got out of the door.

“Well, Overman,” he said anxiously, “what did you get out of him?”

“Nothing, but this. He suggested that I go up to Sacramento to see Jared and tell him——”

“Oh, that’s all, is it?” Morgan’s voice was oily with happiness. “Scoot then, old man, the next train—let me see——”

“I wish, Mr. Morgan,” Overman interrupted impatiently, “that you would give me time to talk to you about the Reverend Grant Mac-

Millan. It's a very important and pathetic case and——”

“And this is even more important and might have been fearfully pathetic for me, if you hadn't just happened in. Overman, I'll owe you my official head if we get a beat on this strike. No, I can't listen. Your train leaves at three—good. That'll give you time to wire down your stuff before midnight. Go, and may heaven speed your footsteps.”

Overman thought a moment. Then he yielded.

“All right,” he said, “I'll have time to write a note first. I can get to the ferry in ten minutes.”

He hurried to his desk and pulling out a wad of paper, began to write.

“Jessica, darlin',

I'm off in five minutes to Sacramento to get an interview with Jared. I particularly don't want to go for there's a man out at the city prison that needs help. You must go to him for me. Ask for the Reverend Grant MacMillan and say that I sent you, so that he will see you. Assure him for me that the moment I get back I'll come out to see him. Tell him that he can count absolutely on me, that I am thinking every moment of his case, that he shall have the money to make good what he has taken, that I have written Donaghey and Hilma to expect him, and that after he gets well up in the mountains, I shall find work

for him through McIntosh—and that all I ask of him, all that he owes me is not to despair.

“Dear Little Lady Love, do this for me, for my heart is sore and my mind is terribly troubled for this man, who is cursed beyond human nature’s capacity to withstand.

In a hurry—O.”

CHAPTER XII

MISS INCELL laid aside her Sunday story—most of her writing was done at home—and standing before her mirror reached for her hat. But she withdrew her hat-pins in a tentative, preoccupied way, and then re-read Overman's note. She set the hat firmly on her head and fastened her veil. And then she glanced thoughtfully over the page again. After this she slipped into her jacket and took up her gloves—when it seemed necessary that she should again read Overman's letter. She walked to the door with the air of one who does a thing with only half one's mind, and then she retraced her steps, took the letter up from the dressing-table and read it still another time.

"Would you call that a love-letter, Miss Incell?" she said, disdainfully questioning her image in the glass. "It's the first you've got from him—such as it is. His heart is sore and his mind is terribly troubled. About you? No, you conceited miss. About a drunken preacher that he never saw till to-day. But . . ." She held the sheets of copy paper, upon which the note had been hastily scrawled, before her lips as though breathing her words into it. "I'd rather have you with your two words of love from him than

a volume of gush from any other man—God love him!”

She slipped the note into her satchel and sallied forth on her mission, chuckling to herself at the thought of a yellow journalist in the role of maid of mercy.

She nodded amicably to the policeman at the iron door before the prison. The police were Miss Incell's very good friends. She was a huge joke to them, her part in the dirty cases they handled appearing to them like the role a piquant, malicious wax doll might play in a cast of bulldogs.

“Good-evenin', Miss Incell!” grinned the policeman on guard. “Back again are ye? My—my—but 'tis a bad sign that ye can nivver kape long out o' jail!”

“Good-evening, Officer McNally. How in the world do you expect a body to keep away from the place where you are, tell me!”

“Oah!” A heave of laughter hoisted McNally's belt-buckle, resting like a boat low on the horizon of the capacious sea of his stomach. “Divvle a wonder 'tis ye get what ye want, young leddy.”

The cachinnatory disturbance to McNally's official formality subsided slowly. He was still wheezing with appreciation when Miss Incell hurried through the corridor and reached the desk.

“You've struck the impossible this time, Miss

Incell," the sergeant said when she made her request. "The preacher won't see you. He positively refuses to talk to anybody except a queer chap who actually——"

"Well, I come from that same queer chap," she interrupted. "Tell Mr. MacMillan that I come from Mr. Overman. He's a particular friend of mine."

The sergeant looked at her a moment scratching his chin gravely. Then a light seemed to dawn upon him; a light that illumined the way of the determined journalist. He winked—a solemn, experienced, appreciative wink—and himself went off with the message.

He returned followed by the minister.

"It will be pleasanter for you and Miss Incell to talk here," he said in a carelessly official tone. In an aside to Miss Incell, he said quickly, "Make hay while the sun shines; he'll bolt the minute he finds out you're a reporter."

Miss Incell thanked him and waved him away. Her eyes were bent upon the thin, wretched looking man approaching and upon the great coat that covered his shivering, nerve-racked body—Anthony Overman's top coat, the one he had bought just a week before. Miss Incell was observant; she recognized it. It had been particularly dear to her for it had given an air of comfortable, citi-

fied largeness to her lover's figure. She experienced a feeling of wrathful impatience with the giver and resentment for the recipient, but she forgot both in the shock of hearing MacMillan's voice.

"Pardon me, Madam, you see what a wretched creature I am. My very wretchedness gives me a claim, I think, upon your forbearance. Did I hear the sergeant say you are a reporter?"

It was such a voice, though weak and ragged, as one hears in pulpits that are filled by exceptional men; in drawing-rooms that are frequented by people of leisure and culture; and on the stage rarely when talent and grace of mind are joined. It was the gentleman's voice, the unmistakable accent with all that it connotes.

"I'm Miss Incell of the *Inquirer*. But I was sent here by Mr. Overman, a particular friend of mine," she said gently.

"It is extremely painful to me to meet a lady." With an eloquent gesture he included his shabbiness, his unshaven face, his shame.

"One gets to think of oneself merely as a reporter, I assure you," she said quickly. "Mr. Overman has been sent out of town unexpectedly on an important detail, but he wrote me a hurried note before he left imploring me to come out to assure you that——" She drew Overman's letter from her

satchel and read aloud the part that concerned the abject creature before her, emphasizing the last line—"All that he owes me is not to despair."

It was habit, a method of work that had often resulted satisfactorily, to make her answer somewhat long. Almost mechanically, even as she read, her mind was seizing and making note of the characteristics of this man's face, of his attitude, his manner, his voice, his clothing, his surroundings. He sat listening to Overman's words, a huddled heap of wretchedness, his unshaven face with its beard of a week's growth gray and lifeless in texture, his eyes dull and miserable, the lines about his sensitive mouth cut deep with bodily and mental agony.

"Not to despair. . . . Not to despair!" he repeated after her.

"There must be something in a man, upon which those who are helping him can build—you know," she suggested. Her voice had a trick of taking the tone that seemed to the interviewed one almost a continuation of his own thought.

"Yes—I know," he said slowly. "But is there that foundation in me? Is there? Others have built on me, and for the seeming lack of it—that something in self—the whole structure has gone down like a card-house, like a thing planted on quicksands. I have been honest with Mr.

Overman. I have told him this. Yet his hope, his hope for me has kindled something in me that—almost hopes, too.”

Miss Incell sat looking at him. There was that in the listening bend of her head, in her receptive attitude that drew this man to confidence. She was only studying him—not unsympathetically. But she was endowed with a capacity for temporarily putting herself in the place of her subject, while he was her subject, that was unlimited by difference in temperament or radical diversity of circumstance. The intelligent light in her pretty eyes, the mobility of her bright face (upon which a speaker whose theme was anything like his life's history, his honest thought, his unaffected belief and unposed attitude, could note and gather the impression he made, as a gardener gathers the flowers from the seed he has sown) these played upon him, drew him on.

To MacMillan, a man beneath his own contempt, a gentleman having before his eyes the coarse prison sights and the vile prison sounds—classed in the minds of his keepers with the vulgar criminals, whom he despised though he envied them their impudent retention of self-respect; and yet, in the terrible humility of his judgment upon himself, held them, too, as better than a man of opportunities, of education, of position, of a semi-

sacred standing fallen lower than they—to the minister, there was something irresistible in this girl's readiness to listen. It soothed his esthetic sense to address himself to the gentlewoman's trim, self-respecting cleanliness of mind and body and attire. It lifted him in his own estimation—if ever so little, that little was fearfully precious to him in the depths where his bruised spirit lay—to be brought in contact with a cultivated mind, now that the first shock of consciousness in his degradation was past. In a way, it seemed for a moment to modify that intolerable disgust of himself, his declassed self, his shamed, unworthy self that was to him now like some bestial, vile garment grown into his very flesh, inescapable, close, stifling him with the corruption of its near presence. And to talk to her gave vent to the congested thoughts thrown back upon themselves and pent within him.

“There is nothing to be said for me—nothing. I am a man without rights. I have not even the right to object to the use men make of me as a terrible example. I have had my chance—and another—and another—and again—and after that. Yet—unspeakable wretch that I am—there is one thing about me that merits respect. Yes, respect.”

For just a second he had thrown his head back assertively; the ghost of some old trick of gesture that painted him for just that fleeting

instant upon his listener's consciousness, with the unspoiled, potential aureole of youth about that head. She saw, like something risen from the dead past, the boy's well-shaped head, the thinking, dreaming forehead, the idealizing eye and the weak, pathetic chin and sensitive, unreliable mouth.

"That one thing"—his resumption of speech seemed almost incongruous after the quick vision she had seen—"is that I try; that I do try; that I atone when I can; that I am humble, humbly eager in my passionate desire to regain—not my position—but my own self-respect. This last time, all I asked was obscurity—merely to be let alone in my poverty and the hard, hard work, which was better than I deserve for it was recreating me, body and soul. I was washing dishes in a cheap restaurant . . . " He put out his hands, an unconscious gesture, and she saw them trembling, roughened, bruised, but the long-fingered, speaking hands of the gentleman.

"I am weak physically as well as morally," he went on with a wry smile, "or rather, because I am so morally—it is my own fault. But I have endured agony enough, standing in that narrow box washing crates of heavy crockery, to satisfy even those who are sinless, if it could be made tangible to them. But a minister needs a topic

for a sensational sermon. He knows me—I mean he has known me, and he has heard what a wreck I have made of my life. So, with an expression of ineffable disgust on his righteous face, he lifts his ex-brother minister out of the pool of vice and sin; lifts him high upon a virtuous pitchfork of uncharity and there, all reeking, dripping with the loathsomeness of the fall, he dissects him for his congregation—and the papers, which the next day report the sermon in full, with an added article upon the present whereabouts of the shivering beast in question.

“A minister, you see—having relinquished by his pretense of being able to show other men how to live, the right of living as other men do, of being human like other men—his sin is not only a blot upon his class, it is an aspersion upon that very Divinity he dared to preach. Oh, I know—I know! Who should know better than I—I, who pretended to be better than the average man and fell so pitifully far below him!

“But, you see, I was no longer a minister. For years, the beast had not polluted the sanctuary. I was nothing—not even an example just then. Just a dish-washer, two hands, two feet to stand upon, endurance, consciousness, That is all I was. I had not even vices. I was sober. And then—suddenly came this pillorying again. I

have borne it before, but it was more vividly done, more pretentiously, perhaps more artistically, with both the pulpit and the press, the power of intelligence and the power of sentiment reaching down to drag this trembling wretch from his pitiful obscurity and hold him up—up in the light of day, so that all men—even those with whom he worked, the boys who waited at table, the Chinaman who cooked in the kitchen—might see him pictured with the brush and pen as he was—as he is.

“And that he might see himself! . . . But, do you know, there is one thing, that a man, fallen like me, however great a wretch he may be, however hardened he may appear, cannot bear—and that is to see himself as he looks to others, without a single, redeeming grace, without a shred of remorse or repentance, without despair as without hope.

“To shut that damning sight out of my eyes, to hide from it, to drown my consciousness of it, I drank. . . . And when I drink I—I steal!”

Jessie Incell's lids had fallen. She saw the cracks in the stone pavement at her feet, though unaware of it, so distinctly that when she got out into the sunshine the blue sky was printed like it. A shiver of disgust, of indignation, of pity passed over her. It was long before she looked up; when

she did she saw that his chin had fallen on his breast and that he had forgotten her.

"I must go," she said rising. "Mr. Overman will surely be back to-morrow. He will come out to see you the moment he arrives, I know he will."

"Thank you." He rose with a courtesy at which her womanhood revolted as at something grotesquely out of place. "What is there in that man that makes him—Christlike? There is not a clergyman in town who would do anything for me any more—except in the way I have told you." His lips writhed. "But this young man—a stranger—I wear his coat. And my soul wears his confidence, the knowledge of his interest, his sympathy, as an exquisite comfort that is like religion. You are his friend?" He looked at her as though he had just come to consider her as a personality. "Tell me then—shall I be too heavy a load for his faith to carry? The hope I should relinquish is too slight, too unworthy a thing to be weighed in the balance against a moment's discouragement for him, the smallest questioning of the justification of optimism, the most fleeting consciousness of defeat. Frankly—dare I accept what he offers?"

"I don't see how you can refuse it. He—Mr. Overman is not like—anybody else." Her voice faltered and she blushed at praising him. "His

charity is independent of his hope or his belief, you know. Failure itself could not alter it, I think. But, you remember, he says you owe it to him not to despair."

He turned back on his way to his cell and she hurried as if for relief from a nightmare to the door.

As she passed the desk the sergeant touched his cap in admiration, and a reporter from a rival paper stepped forward.

"Do you mean to say, Miss Incell, that you've actually got MacMillan to talk?" he asked with good-natured envy. "Why, every paper in town——"

"It's only one more little scoop," she said smiling tormentingly; she could not resist it.

"Just the same the *Inquirer* office thinks it the biggest thing yet," the sergeant said leaning over the desk.

"How do you know?" demanded Miss Incell.

"Why Morgan, the new city editor telephoned out ten minutes ago promising me anything from the chief's office to a brindle pup if I'd get a man into MacMillan's cell. 'Can't be done,' I phoned back. 'He won't see a soul except the woman reporter that's talking to him now.' 'The woman reporter,' he yelled cursing like a pirate, 'what woman reporter—what paper?' 'I forget her name', says I softly. 'Blank it, man, remember!'

he yells. 'Seems to me it was Julie—no Jessie. Could it have been Jessie——' I whispers. 'In-cell!' he roars fit to break the receiver and my ear drum with it. 'Tell her she can have the whole paper,' he chortled. 'Tell her to come straight to my room the minute she gets through. Tell her——' And there I rung him off. The chief don't allow us to deliver tender messages like that—it's against the rules."

Miss Incell smiled and thanked him and looked thoughtful; but she got past McNally, who warned her to "mind 'tis easier to get in jail than out" and caught a car down town.

The next morning her interview with the Reverend Grant MacMillan with its flaring top line, "What Charity Saints in the Ministry have for Sinners," was spread over half the first page of the *Inquirer*. The information that a strike of teamsters had been decided upon held the other half.

In the local room Morgan was receiving congratulations from the office assembled and was affably assuring his friends that it was all due to sheer luck, but that "the Boss, as well as God himself, does love a lucky city editor." Miss Incell was resting as rest the work-weary, who fear to wake and face a conscience; she had remembered just before she fell asleep that she had an

engagement to be one of a theatre party the following evening and she was glad of it. Overman was on the train bound back to the city and was just opening the *Inquirer*—the last the train boy had for sale.

CHAPTER XIII

A DESPERATE flirtation was in progress between Doctor Baumfelder and Mrs. Eveson, the newspaper artist, during which Miss Incell and the young violinist, Baumfelder's protégé, played the part of amused spectators, dividing their time between the light opera on the stage and the operatic love affair in the box.

The little artist, who naïvely reproduced her own pretty face modified into various types of beauty in every woman's picture which she drew for the *Inquirer*, was a shallow, amiable, vain, light-hearted coquette. She had "lost her husband in the shuffle" as she was wont to express it when, with her faculty for making all pictured women attractive, she invaded Bohemia. She spoke of him lightly as "the very late Mr. Eveson," though divorce not death separated them. She was as consistently conscienceless in her work as in her personal relations, and looked at life as merely another phase of the farce newspaper proprietors play, with a tricky, sensational insincerity and plenty of false sentiment to sweeten the cynical pill.

"She's light champagne—very, very light and dry, your friend," said Baumfelder in a pause, leaning forward audaciously to pass on his impres-

sion to Miss Incell. "What atonement can Fate provide for making a woman so pretty and such an imbecile! 'Oh, full many a bottle of this forbidden wine etc., etc.' . . . If she only had your wit, Miss Incell!"

"So good of you, Doctor!" Miss Incell sneered. "But you insisted upon meeting her."

"Tut—you're too clever not to know when a man's sincere. No, as it is, the wine's too sweet—it cloyes."

"And yet it's champagne?" She lifted her eyebrows mockingly.

"And yet it's champagne," he murmured whimsically self-critical.

"Are you getting tired of the show?" Mrs. Eveson bent forward, having caught the last word. "Shall we go to supper?"

"Oh, you're not going!" All the musician in young Wissner rebelled. "Why, Baumfelder, you haven't heard that intermezzo we came specially to hear."

"Suppose, Mrs. Eveson, you and the doctor go to the café," Miss Incell suggested, "and Mr. Wissner and I will join you after the intermezzo. It's his own intermezzo and surely a man ought to know whether his own work is worth listening to or not."

"Oh, why didn't you tell me?" Mrs. Eveson

fixed her laughing, pretty eyes upon the young violinist. "Of course we'll stay."

And while Wissner hastened to explain to her how this first composition of his came to be interpolated in the opera, Miss Incell turned to Baumfelder.

"Don't you ever expect me," she said under her breath, "to throw away opportunities upon an ungrateful man again. Why didn't you go?"

"Because I love music—as well as champagne. And Wissner here can put into melody such emotion as—as a woman like you could feel; if she would permit herself."

"You think compliments in couplets, Doctor?"

"Not when I think of you. When I think of you——Ah, listen! There begins the intermezzo: that is how I think of you."

As they walked away from the theatre Baumfelder was expatiating upon the two themes dearest to him—music and women—and the relation they bore to each other in his thoughts. His powerful, but well-proportioned figure in its somewhat striking fur-lined coat, and the sonorous melody of his deep bass made people pause upon the street to look after him. Among others, they attracted the attention of Overman, just swinging off a cable car at the corner of the street, and his eye ran on from Baumfelder to Mrs. Eveson's

winsome blondness and Jessie Incell's alert face beyond.

She caught his eye almost at the instant it lighted upon her and stopped—though somewhere in the back of her consciousness fear clutched her—and held out her hand with a welcoming gesture whose grace and fulness struck the esthetic Baumfelder as something beautiful.

"We were on our way up to the flat, Mr. Overman," she said. "You'll come? . . . I'm—I'm glad," she added with a breath of relief at his assent. "We've been listening to Mr. Wissner's intermezzo. And after that," she rattled on gaily now, "Doctor Baumfelder says nothing but a welsh rarebit and beer will suffice."

"You've never tasted a rarebit of mine, Overman?" said Baumfelder moving with Mrs. Eveson to his side. "Well, it's my one vanity. No one in the profession—or out of it—can make rarebit as I do."

"I'm such a primitive sort of savage, Doctor," Overman laughed, "it's a pity to waste specialized culinary talent on me."

"We'll see. Tell me,"—Baumfelder placed a protecting palm over Mrs. Eveson's gloved hand as it lay on his arm; he always felt tenderly apologetic when he mentioned one woman admiringly in another's presence. "What has become of that

wonderful symphony of peace in woman's shape I saw up in the woods when I met you."

"He means Hilma," Miss Incell cried looking back at them. The after effect of hard work with her was a pleasurable sense of relaxation; her light-heartedness of the evening had developed into effervescent gayety since Overman had joined them. "Why, she's still up there, Doctor. I just sent off a big box of—of things to Hilma to-day. If I had only known you remembered her, you might have sent something pretty too."

She laughed as though at a joke she was sharing with nobody.

"Remember her," repeated Baumfelder. "Does anybody with an eye or an ear forget a woman or a strain of music? I was saying to Miss Incell," he continued turning again to Overman, whom he seemed desirous of studying, "that Wissner's music almost expresses her; at least its effect is that combination of wit, of malice, of warm-heartedness, that pretended, mocking imperviousness to sentiment—it is pretended, is it not?" He put the question suddenly.

"Altogether," responded Overman so promptly that the inquisitive Doctor was disappointed. "Witness the bond between her and Hilma."

"Hilma—ah, that woman!" sighed the Doctor sentimentally. "If she were my friend's wife,

instead of your friend's, I'd steal her from him."

"Hilma!" exclaimed Overman. "Why, if I had a sister she couldn't be more to me than Hilma."

"Well, be glad that you haven't a sister like her," said Baumfelder gravely. "Would you give up half of your fingers because you have ten of them? Never limit possibilities; it's flying in the face of Providence. Thank God, I haven't sisters. . . . No, that woman—no one but a Schubert could express the soul of such a creature, the warm, deep, peaceful current of *die Weiber Seele* upon which a man might rest his boat free of all care of treacherous shoals, of restless——"

"He met her just once, Mrs. Eveson," explained Miss Incell ironically.

"The doctor is so susceptible," said Mrs. Eveson. "Who is she—an actress?"

"A born nurse. A healer of bodies as well as souls," sighed the Doctor.

Mrs. Eveson pursed her pink little mouth.

"I am trying to find the music that symbolizes you, Mrs. Eveson," Baumfelder said irrelevantly; it seemed quite natural to him that she should weary of this discussion of another woman.

Though there was a faintly ironical inflection in his voice, unseizable by Mrs. Eveson's ear, he bent

over her with gallantry helping her to remove her wraps. They had arrived at the little apartment now and Miss Incell was directing the lisping Lisbeth as to chafing dishes and beer bottles. Overman was listening to young Wissner, who had taken his violin from its case, and was playing softly the tarantelle of his loved intermezzo, his boyish face flushed with pleasure. There was something very attractive to Overman in this talented boy, whom he knew well; in his ardor, his simplicity, his utter ignorance of the deeper meaning of the world where others dwelt and his esoteric knowledge of the world of art he himself lived in.

"If I could play like that," Anthony said when he finished, "I'd take my violin down to a room I know on Tehama street where a crippled girl works from six in the morning till eight at night. I'd play for her."

"If I could play like that," parodied Miss Incell saucily, as she laid the cloth, "I'd take my violin to the best market. I'd sell my work to the highest bidder and, with some very small portion of what I made, I'd lift the crippled girl out of necessity to work—forever."

"And if I could play like that," put in Baumfelder, "I'd take my violin into a boat with me at sunset and I'd play only to the lady of my love who——"

"A requisition for a score of boats, as many violins and ditto in sunsets for Doctor Baumfelder!" called Miss Incell in so authoritative a tone that Lisbeth came hurrying in questioningly from the next room, only to find the Doctor threatening her mistress with a wooden spoon with which he was softening some cheese.

"Well, if I could play like that," Mrs. Eveson said with a laugh, "I'd certainly not waste my music on an ignorant factory girl, crippled or whole."

"But music is an emotion, not a faculty," remonstrated Overman. "I am as ignorant of everything artistic as the girl down on Tehama street, but I can feel a thing like that."

"Your suggestion is not very practical, Overman. Miss Incell is right." Baumfelder looked up from the chafing dish over which he had been bending in seemingly scientific absorption. "To appreciate art one must be at peace. To your crippled girl—a suffering creature in body, in mind—the most beautiful sound or sight on earth does not mean as much as a deep sleep, a moment of comfortable relaxing of her twisted muscles. Music—poetry—painting—they are the joys of the strong in spirit and in body. Only Nature's self can move the sick as art affects the well."

"I can't agree with you, but I hadn't thought

it out," said Overman whose taste for argument was limited to the things that interested him most. "It was only an impulse, the instinct—which must be 'right—to give the most precious thing one has."

Baumfelder was bending over Mrs. Eveson, his eyes, his lips, his pose offering flattery. But a hint of something more than a mere fancy in Overman's words made him look up and glance quickly from him to Jessie Incell's face.

She caught his eye and held it defiantly.

"The most precious thing one has, Mr. Overman," Baumfelder said seriously "is altogether too precious to——"

But the door opened just then and Lisbeth showed Morgan in.

"My, it must be late if you can get away from the office," cried Mrs. Eveson, nestling pleasurably down in her chair; she was still new enough to life to feel her spirits rise as the hours lengthened. "Dean, what time is it?"

"Time to get a taste of Baumfelder's rarebit, that's all I know. Halloo, Overman, I bet you don't know you got a raise for that strike scoop and for putting Miss Incell on to the MacMillan story."

"Then that wasn't your own scoop?" Mrs. Eveson turned to Miss Incell, who had stood for a moment as though waiting.

"No," said Morgan. "Overman really got that for us. Jessie confessed the moment she met my stern city-editorial eye. But it's all in the family."

Baumfelder looked again from Overman to Miss Incell. But Jessie had gone to get a plate and a glass for Morgan, and Overman was laughing with young Wissner over a story of a student's prank in Munich, of which he had been the hero. There was something very boyish about Overman's laugh, Baumfelder said to himself. He never remembered to have heard it before. And there was a pleasing humility and humanity to-night in the manner of this dogmatic young fellow, the older man thought; something that atoned for his having set himself up to be so much more altruistic than other people.

"You make me feel like a limited creature," Overman was saying to the musician. "Here you are, a boy, and you have seen the world and laughed at it and with it. To myself I seem like an animal at the end of a tether. A man's only half a man who hasn't stood a stranger at the walls of a city's life, and conquered it."

"That's the most human thing I've ever heard you say, Overman." Baumfelder lifted his glass, pledging him, and then drank his beer with that stately ceremony which makes a gracious rite of appetite.

The surgeon was not the only one who warmed to Overman that night. Morgan said, in an aside to Miss Incell, that newspaper life was making a livable, human being out of her crank protégé. Wissner was frankly drawn to him and manifested the pleasurable sense of nearing friendship by the unconscious use of a special tone in his boyish voice, when he spoke to Anthony. To Jessie herself, subconsciously convicted of guilt in having fallen from an ideal, her lover's pleasure in his surroundings meant half-incredulous relief from apprehension, half-unreasoning disappointment in him.

Anthony and the young German drifted into a socialistic argument after a time, but it was an optimistic, wholly ideal socialism they discussed; a theory far removed from the danger of being put into practice that this young German artist proposed; and the new mood that seemed to possess Overman this evening, forbade the interjection of anything like strenuous realities. Even Mrs. Eveson lost her distrust of him. She was wont to look at him, since he had joined the paper's staff, as at some desperate dynamiting brigand, determined to make rich people uncomfortable physically and poor people like herself (poverty more poignant than her own lack of furs and jewels she could not conceive) uncomfortable mentally—if that were possible.

It was after they had all sat chatting till late in the night, with that comfortable ignoring of time that Bohemia fosters, and had finally departed in a body, that Miss Incell sent the sleepy Lisbeth to recall Overman just as the others had begun to run down the stairs.

"You have been so nice to-night." She held out her hands to him. "So possible—so—so easy — so livable, so lovable, Anthony. I couldn't let you go—though you must stay just a minute."

He took her hands and drew her to him and, holding her little head to his breast, he stood looking out with her upon the be-diamonded bay.

"Life is so pleasant," she murmured softly as though musing aloud. "There is so much in it. There are so many things to interest one and to charm. Duty seems so simple a thing to me—now. Oh, dear, my life so contents me. Fortune seems to have placed me just where I am best fitted to live. My little work, my little play, my playmates—Anthony, I am happy. Go now—good-night."

She slipped away from him. But he bent down and, with a passion that made her tremble, he took her in his arms, kissing her lips again and again with a thirsty, insatiate strength of desire that left her weak and shattered.

She fell upon her knees at the open window as the door closed behind him, bowing her throbbing head upon the casement and throwing her arms out to the night.

“Oh, world,” she cried, “I am so happy!”

CHAPTER XIV

“SEE, Sweetheart, though it is morning, it doesn’t seem an hour since I left you,” Overman wrote. “I still feel on my mouth the sweet fire of your lips. From the caress which my arms still fall into of themselves, a sculptor could mold the little, lovely figure they seem yet to hold. The words that don’t say themselves readily for me when I am with you are leaping from my very heart—my love—my love.

“But the end has come. I knew it last night. I have spent the night trying not to know it. Listen. I am sure you will understand me, however mad and cranky I may appear to anyone else.

“But I cannot fit myself into your world, dear, warm little heart. I don’t belong there. That life, that so contents you, I can play at living for an evening so that our last memory of each other, as we hoped to be to each other, might be good to look back upon. But it is only playing. And the Anthony whom you found ‘possible—easy—livable—lovable’—that is not I; it is only the pretense of a man who loves, trying to be for an hour or two, what will please you. In other words, it is only a temporary lover made by yourself, with all the real motive of his life buried beneath a selfish happiness, a frivolous greed for

ease of mind and body—such a man as you would not long love, as you could not respect.

“I am the one to blame, beloved. The commonplace attraction of commonplace women, the eye-temptation that beauty is—I can withstand these. But I am so fashioned that I cannot fight against you—you—all that you are; all that you mean to a man.

“But it was shamelessly, selfishly cruel of me to let you tangle your gay little life with mine. At the best my future is an interrogation. I am not a success in the profession you have loaned me. You know I’m not, you only hope I will be. And you know that this absurd, little, temporary success, which will pass in a moment, is built on chance—and an unworthiness.

“Dear, I never could play the judge with you. You could not have betrayed MacMillan’s confidence and set him up again in the pillory, if you had looked at the matter as it appears to me—as it must appear to him. But a profession in which such a betrayal would not only be sanctioned but applauded as a rarely skilful piece of journalistic work—Oh, Jessie, you know I am not a Pharisee—there can be no success for me in such a profession, even if I were to aim at it with all my soul.

“So I am leaving the paper—not immediately, but before long. I—we owe it to MacMillan to

at least let his body benefit by the publicity that must have seared his soul and perhaps wrecked his confidence forever in humanity's charity. I shall send him up to Hilma, and Donaghey will find work for him when he is fit for it; and this expense, with the amount of his debt which I have promised to pay, will keep me working here a little longer.

"After that—Darling, I don't know. Isn't this confession of incapacity enough to absolve you from your promise to me and to yourself? Would you let your daughter stake her future on a man who had only this to say? Would you welcome a daughter-in-law if your son were such a man?

"Your life is too full, Jessie, your nature is too sunny, you deserve too well from the world, you clever, brave little working woman, for this or any other outside influence to make you lastingly unhappy. It has not hurt us irrevocably to be together a while and to part. I have not spoiled your life—as I should have done if we had lived our fairy tale instead of getting a bare glimpse of it. I have only troubled it for a time. Forgive me. You are and always will be to me a revelation of such soul companionship, such cheer and charm as I had no idea that life could hold.

"The longer I write the more unwilling I am

to end this—and all that of which this is the end. I said good-bye to you in my heart last night when I had you in my arms. It seems to me I'd give my life to have you close to me once more. But I should never have the courage to leave you again—and I am ashamed to stay.

(“To men who part from the women they love, must come the agonizing apprehension of the beloved one's helplessness in time of stress or suffering, the craving to watch over her—but, you see, I am denied that tender pain. You are stronger without me. You will be happier.

“My love—my little love—good bye. God bless you, Jessie.—A. O.”

Overman sat looking at the last words he had written. His face was white to the lips. And the red-haired office-boy stood patiently looking at him. But Overman had forgotten that he had rung. He looked up with a start when the little fellow coughed deprecatingly, and folded the letter and put it in an envelope. But at the last he had a foolish notion that the thing he held in his hand was a thing that had lived and was dead, and because he wanted to be alone with it for the last moment before he put it away forever, he sent the boy from the room, telling him that he would mail the letter himself.

He left the office and slipped the letter into a

box; then he took an uptown car. He was determined to fill the hours that came before time to report at the office with a multitude of small details requiring his closest attention. There was but one thing he dared not do—to think. It was still early when he saw the Reverend Grant MacMillan, presenting at the door of his cell a face almost as haggard and hopeless as the minister's own. MacMillan had attempted suicide in the night. He was still weak, but the re-awakening of his hope in one man, when Anthony unfolded his plans for him, was like a new birth to him. Overman effected his release; went with him to the dirty, busy little restaurant where he had worked, paid the sum MacMillan had stolen; bought him clothes and a railroad ticket, sent a telegram to Donaghey and put his charge on the train. Then he hurried to the office.

Morgan gave him his detail and Overman made a note of it.

"But I'm leaving the paper, Mr. Morgan," he said, "at the end of the week."

"What's up?" Morgan's young city-editorship scented a rival's jealous hand. "Has that strike scoop brought you an offer from the News?"

"No—San Francisco papers are not competing for my services. But, as you know even better than I, I am not fitted for newspaper work."

Morgan rubbed his chin as he sat curiously looking up at him.

"The retort open to you is obvious, of course, but—aren't you more of a crank, Overman, than is altogether necessary?"

"I suppose so—or rather, I think not. At any rate, thank you, but I must quit after this week."

"Well—all right. But if you should change your mind—I suppose cranks are like ordinary men in some things—the staff's elastic, you know. There'll be room for you."

Morgan felicitated himself upon his generosity when Overman had left the room.

"That was uncommonly nice of you, Dean, old man—under the circumstances," he said appreciatively. "God will put a little thing like that down on the lonesome side of your account. . . . He will. Yes, of course, but will Jessie Incell? That's a more important point, as it's that elusive Jessie you're sighing for, you love-sick turtle-dove! How to let her know how nice you are—there's the rub about falling in love with a girl that isn't a fool; it's so darned hard to have all your wits about you when she's robbed you of any sense you once possessed. . . . Overman looked like the devil, that he did. Now, when one is a saint as well as a crank, one can't make himself look like the devil by the usual journalistic

process. It isn't a jag; it's Jessie. They've quarrelled."

His eye and his hand sought the telephone. But he did not call up Miss Incell, nor did he speak to her of Overman's resignation when he met her out dining with Doctor Baumfelder and Mrs. Eveson. She did not come to the office at all that week, but sent her copy down by messenger and when the Friday came on which her friends usually spent the evening with her, Overman was on his way to Little Gap.

He had not written to Donaghey to expect him. He wanted, in the soreness and loneliness of his heart, to glean all the tenderness that life yet held for him by coming upon these two, to whom he still was dear, by surprise. He arrived at evening and walked down through the soft dusk of the late autumn. The rains had begun and the dust was packed fresh and tight on the familiar broad roadway. The higher hills showed a fresh powdering of snow and the giant summits lifted shoulders of purer white. It might have been on such a night as this, Overman said to himself as he walked, that a girl had appeared out of the darkness before him and Donaghey and Hilma; a girl with a supple, light little body and an impudent, bright face, with a wooing, merry voice and a laugh that seemed to have

all the mirth in the world in it to flood the world with again.

He looked back upon himself—that steady, secure, untried self—and he thought with a pang of pain and joy, how like a strong young faun the old Anthony Overman had been—till this girl stranger roused something in him he had not known he possessed. How straight the road had looked before him; straight as this which was leading him to the cottage he and Donaghey had almost rebuilt. How simple and natural and easy the life had looked that he once planned—a brotherhood of monks, he had dreamed, of which himself should be abbot, prior and men. The rules of this brotherhood were to be one: devotion, charity, self-sacrifice. And Anthony Overman had not known what renunciation could be made to signify! He knew now, he said to himself. And he had been strong enough to make the sacrifice; but it seemed to him, as he strode along, that he had given up all his strength and hope and interest in life with it; and that the sacrifice was hardly worth while that left behind it such a crippled, bewildered soul as this.

The light that shone out from Hilma's window, as he entered the forest and neared the clearing beyond, was like something sentient to him. It was a voice from the past—his past when he had

asked nothing of the future, when he was independent of fate. It called him, that light, and subtly it strengthened him. For it reminded him how often he had travelled this road in confident strength, in altruistic hope, in stress of struggle with his soul and even starvation of his body, only to find himself master of himself at the end, firm in his purpose to devote all that he was to humanity without regard to the littleness of his offer or the greatness of the world's wants.

The door had been left open. From the road Overman saw the warm, yellow light, now brighter, now softened, streaming down the few steps and out into the unfenced yard. The place looked unreal to him all at once in the stillness, now that he had reached it. He had been wearying for it day and night this past week in the city, which his estrangement from Jessie had bewitched into a selfish, hurrying crowd of strangers. Truly, a spell of silence seemed to be upon the little cottage alone in the forest. Anthony was listening for Donaghey's high-pitched voice and the short laugh with which the Irishman punctuated his speech; but a train went crashing through the forest just then, sending its wild wail like a shrieking telegram apprising the mountains of its coming, and Overman got up the steps and stood in the doorway, unhearing and unheard.

But he did not enter. He looked in. And what he saw held him back. A conflict of emotions possessed his breast and clouded his mind. A strange duality of feeling oppressed him. He seemed to himself, while he stood there as though paralyzed, to be two men, not one. And one of these—that young, confident, exalted, un-human Anthony was the accuser, while the old, the saddened, the beaten Anthony defended; yet, even smiled appreciatively, with a new sense of the humorous—and envied. And, after all, what he saw was the commonest sight. Yet Michaelangelo saw it once and poured its passionate humanity into marble—a history of the making of races as well as religions.

In the heart of the big fireplace, which Donaghey had worked all these months to build in the west wall, a great log lay burning, and in the glow of its soft warmth that flooded the room—and had even run out upon the road to welcome him—Overman saw Hilma sitting in the low rocker with her baby at her breast.

So long he stood there, so motionless was her attitude, so secure she seemed and long-possessed in her woman's inheritance that he had almost come to believe he had never known her childless, when suddenly a shower of sparks flying up from the log made her lift her eyes, and she saw him.

Instantly she rose and made as though to fly. Instinct spoke in the way her arm hollowed to hold and protect the child. Instinct put her remaining hand as a shield between it and Anthony's eyes. But the interfering precepts of the religion she had professed, and a consciousness of how unworthy she must appear in the eyes of the priest she had herself selected flooded with a burning blush her face and bare white breast.

"Hilma, you're not afraid of me!" he cried.

"Oh, Anthony," she gasped, a prey to shame and pride. "Look at him—so warm, so white, so sweet! Sin it cannot be him to bring into the world. I have prayed, Anthony, I have prayed that you would know and forgive and——"

"Hush, Hilma, what have I——" he began.

"But I wish Will here was. Often and often he has tried to you to write, but always it was too hard. And so we kept it, hoping that when Jessie all the pretty baby-clothes sent, in some way she—you. . . ." Her voice trailed guiltily into silence.

"Come Hilma, don't be so agitated," he said leading her back to her chair. "See—there once was a Pharisee named Anthony, who could cheerfully deny to others the things he himself did not care for. He cuts a ridiculous figure, that young fool Anthony, seen in some lights, and in others a

most contemptible one. The best thing to do is not to look at him in any light at all. There—there, don't Hilma!"

She had caught his hand and pressed it in gratitude and reverence. He took the sleeping child from her and held it a moment in his arms, looking down upon it with tender curiosity.

"Even"—Hilma whispered looking up, perfect happiness in her face to see her saint hold her child, "even it seems to make one better! Since its birth Will (he is up in the town with Mr. Mac-Millan) Will has not once his temper lost. He says the child shall never its father see and him remember as unworthy. And I—oh Anthony—sanctification it is a woman feels when her child is born!"

Overman stood in silence. He seemed now clearly at last to realize what self-sacrifice means. His eyes had wandered from the baby's face; they were bitter and restless and longing, as though they gazed beyond the mountains and valleys and waters that separated him from Jessie Incell and saw her, her head bowed upon her casement, her arms outstretched to the night, crying desperately in her soul,

"Oh God, I am so miserable!"

CHAPTER XV

OVERMAN lingered on at Little Gap. He had not intended to spend more than twenty-four hours there before taking the train for the east. But a presence dwelt in the little place that held him. It was his youth that faced him, the youth of his spirit, buoyant though full of thought, quick with hope and strength and courage, unhindered in action and blessed with such a simple philosophy that it seemed to go straight toward its mark like a human arrow sent from the great Bow's soul.

The self that he had become was more like a flying thing tethered. And O, the tether was sweet to him, and he loved it, he caressed it, feeling always in his heart that the youth he had been would have torn himself loose from it. And yet he would permit no contempt to enter into that reacting inward gaze which his old self returned for the new one's impersonal sort of criticism. This tethered creature was limited, compared with the old self he had known, but how limited in another sense was the idealist who had never taken part in that selfish yet altruistic duet, in which two souls melt for very faith and love and charity into each other. There was something not quite human, he admitted now, about that Idealist,

and Anthony in his pain looked back pityingly upon him—and envyingly. He wanted the Renunciant's peace, his poise, his selfless strength that permitted him to look upon himself as a mere machine to carry out plans, to fulfill hopes and promises.

And so he spent his days retracing that Idealist's steps, putting himself physically in his place and striving for the old point of view. The old religious fervor that had upheld him when he worked with all his might at primitive tasks, when he fasted out on these hills for the prescribed forty days, the sense of nearness that he had had to the heart of things, to the simple solution of the world riddle he had once been so sure of when he prayed and meditated in the little prayer-houses set out in the solitude—he did not seek to revive all this. He thought it as irrevocably dead as the immunity from passion which had accompanied it. But as he walked over the mountains it was as with a companion by his side, a companion like, and yet not himself, from whose serene strength he borrowed hourly.

When he came back from his long tramp one evening at the end of the week, Donaghey handed him a letter had come for him. It was from McIntosh, the labor union leader.

"I got your address from the *Inquirer*," he

wrote. "I am glad you are free, for I want to offer you an editorial position on the new *Workingman's Weekly* we start within a couple of weeks. There is no fortune in it for you nor for the rest of us, but there is a chance to do good work and be decently paid for it. Will you come? The strike is on to stay and we want our own paper and we want it now. If you intend to come, now's the time."

It was after supper was over that they discussed the proposition. Hilma, who got her strength back very slowly, had gone to bed. The baby lay on a pillow in the rocking-chair, on which the Irishman's hand rested giving it a gentle swing now and then that spun a tender woof for their talk to weave itself upon.

"I can't see why you hesitate," Donaghey said, his eyes following Overman curiously as he walked up and down. "It ought to be just what you'd like, Anthony, and just what you can do well."

"If it was anywhere else than San Francisco."

"That's not like you," Donaghey said quickly. "What's the town got to do with it? I wish 'twas myself that had that bit of knack you've got to write. I'd say yes mighty quick to an offer like that."

Overman stopped behind the big rocker to look

at him; there was something in the Irishman's voice that struck him peculiarly.

"You're not discontented?" he asked, lowering his voice as the baby stirred. "It's not much you and Hilma have, but oh the peace there is up here, Will!"

A queer half-smile flitted over the Irishman's face. It was a determined face and yet there lurked in it a subtle element of weakness. He tugged at his short mustache for a moment before he spoke.

"Just peace ain't what a man like me's got any right to look for. I've too good reasons for discontent, Anthony. There they are." He pointed at the baby, whose lids were fluttering as though sleep were hesitating on the very border of consciousness, and then to the next room to which Hilma had withdrawn. "Since I got my senses back I've never been able to see rightly what struck me when I threw up my job and followed old Senn out here. It was natural enough in you, for it was right in your line. But imagine a Catholic and a workingman swallowing that hash of religion and communism and playing early Christian! It was hysteria with me. I'd got into the deuce of a mess with this beastly temper of mine just then and I'd have enlisted, I suppose, or gone to the devil if either Uncle Sam or his

satanic majesty had happened to come a—tempting me as opportunely as Senn did. Well—I'm not sorry, for two reasons again, the same two. But the man that's got four hands clinging to him ain't the same man that came up to the mountains to build a new Jerusalem. The plain old world's good enough for me—if it gives me a chance to do for Hilma and the child. I don't know exactly the after-effect Senn's had on you—I guess you had it worse than I; but he's made me a better Catholic than I ever was, and he's cured me once and for all of nonsense. It's taken the conceit out of me, Anthony. There's no kick left in me. No more reforming the world from yours truly. I want nothing to do with reformers, except you—devil take you; I can't cure myself of my liking for you. I thought—I hoped we'd fall out, you and I, over this." He chuckled grimly, his open hand indicating the child. "But I realized how sorry I'd have been, if we had, by measuring my relief when I found you'd graciously deigned to overlook it."

They both laughed softly so as not to wake the sleeping child.

"But what with my experience with Senn," Donaghey went on, "and what with my having a wife now and a child, and something cross-grained perhaps that I've always had in me—

you'll say it's narrowed me. Well—it may be. But all I want of the world is to give me a place in it for me and Hilma and the baby. And that's why I ought to quit this 'Home of Peace,' " he sneered. "And I would to-day if that fool strike wasn't on down in the city, crippling a man's every chance to make a start."

"Why, Will, you're in sympathy with the strikers!" Overman exclaimed incredulously.

"Not I." Donaghey shook his head doggedly, biting hard upon the pipe he had taken to smoking. "Those strikers down yonder are only doing in a body what I did when I joined Senn—challenging circumstances, throwing up a good job for a mad hope; being swindled by a sort of socialistic cant instead of the holy-holy kind; going in for something they don't really understand, as I did, and bound to come out at the little end of it with a clear loss behind them of money and time. . . . not to count the suffering of wives and children. And, to come down to the real thing, Hilma isn't well. She don't get well. That fellow,"—he nodded toward the child with a glance half-proud, half-resentful—"just gets bigger and stronger every day. But she—I tell you, Anthony, all the ideas in the world are nothing but hot air, just empty breath, when your wife's ailing and you know that that big city doc-

tor could cure her and—and you can't get to him."

Overman looked down upon him as he sat, his chin in his hands, his knitted brows and troubled eyes bent fixedly on the rocking-chair that was still now. It was a new Donaghey that had developed during the months of separation; a man that seemed oddly strange and even antagonistic to all that Overman still held dear; but who was as near to him, as intimately connected with his life and his affections as though the brotherly bonds which once held these two—who so literally and idealistically had obeyed the spirit of communism—were still strong and unbroken.

"I'll take the thing McIntosh offers, Will," he said after a pause, "if you'll bring Hilma down to the city after I've got a place for you both, and have Baumfelder cure her."

Donaghey looked up, a light in his small, heavily-lashed eyes that made his twisted little face almost lovable. "That's like you, Anthony. But you see along with the things I've turned my back on is living off somebody else. I want to live regular—I want to be regular. Just so far as I went off the beaten track, just that far have I to go over on the other side. I'm a conservative now I tell you, a conservative, a regular who——"

“Who’d let his wife suffer rather than borrow from his friend and hers.”

Donaghey had jumped to his feet and was wringing Overman’s hand.

“No—who’s an ass to pretend for a minute that he would. But it’s a loan this time, Anthony, if ye love me. And I’ll get to work down there in spite of those blamed, idiotic strikers and I’ll pay you back every cent—you blessed crank!”

It was a different sort of San Francisco Overman met and knew this time. The town was aflame with the passion of the old, old war between capital and labor. The economic machinery of the whole state was clogged and awry, but in the city itself the struggle was bitterest.

Overman felt himself caught up in what seemed the expression of a mighty temperament at war with itself. The mass of life compressed into a single and uniform condition, the thousands of workingmen whose desires and dreams had all concentrated into a single hope came to appear to him as a single individuality animated by such diverse passions, capable of such varied emotions that he who tried to realize it all, its form and essence, endured in himself all that its components suffered.

He hammered with his pen and his tongue—for he was an orator of a simple, forthright kind—

at the national sin of privileging the predatory. He pleaded with the wild passions let loose that had begun to slake their righteous wrath in unrighteous retribution. The artist in him, of whose existence he had been unaware, waked with the right to work at congenial things and he experienced, for the first time, that keen, queer literary pleasure in the right and fitting use of words that was a joy apart from truth-telling; for it was telling the truth well. All he had read—and the bent of his mind had always been toward the solution of the problem of living, however idealistic had been his interpretation of ways and means—had been stored and systematized by that automatic process, with which the single-minded are gifted. All he had thought bore now on the thing he had to say. The unconventional form in which his inexperience at first expressed itself betrayed an awkwardness in handling his tools, but no crudity of thought. For Overman at this period of his life was merely living his inner life into literature.

There could not but be a response to sincerity and strength such as this at a time when, in the temporary disarrangement of social conditions, men's minds were receptive to all theories bearing upon the reorganization of the social strata. Every thinker in the state—the unbalanced and irrational as well as the conscientious and re-

sponsible—felt that force which put into words something, some part of his own creed.

“Anthony’s got a natural attraction for cranks of all kinds; he’s a crank magnet,” Donaghey used to say. “And the reason is that there’s nothing so mad in the list of crank’s diseases that he hasn’t had it.”

That he would make a reputation with his pen had not occurred to Overman. The personal form of his utterance, which a sensational press had made popular before his time, was due merely to his unfamiliarity with any other form of expression. His name at the head of his columns was an idea of McIntosh’s; it came to mean more than the Scotchman had dreamed. But Overman knew as little what to do with that reputation when it came to him, as how or why it had come. He had a sense of a sort of spurious renown at this time; of being considered in a light that was illegitimate, in a way that was somehow undeserved. In his heart he was as out of key with the reformers—each of whom was a specialist with a patent nostrum for a particular sociological ailment, but with not the least thought or care how these remedies would affect other maladies of the body politic—as he was with the men who like himself held editorial office; those purchasable pen-and-ink preachers whose impassioned ser-

mons for or against are for sale to the highest bidder. But these, on the contrary, regarded Overman as one of themselves who was shrewdly catering to a present public taste, and at the same time making a name that would be of use in future contingencies.

But Overman was merely putting all his mind, all the sinews of his being into the solution of a problem. He was living, for the time, as though existence for him had begun and would end with this particular phase of the never-ending struggle. He was honest because he was expressing with simple strength the convictions of an almost primitive mind, acted upon and acting for the first time through realities, yet bulwarked by the best thought of the great altruists.

He could not be self-seeking; he could not be hampered by considerations that hold and belittle, for the reason that he had no ambition, not even a literary one. Power did not tempt him, communist as he was. He could not have borne wealth, nor have held it but for so long as it took to transfer it to those to whom, now and in the same proportion, he made over what he earned.

Hilma's health was the one personal consideration the world held for him. He lived, in the midst of thought and action, more lonely than he had been in the cottage at Little Gap. From

Morgan, whom he met occasionally, he learned that Jessie Incell had gone to Alaska with a party of which Mrs. Eveson was one and Doctor Baumfelder another, to escape the windy, foggy summer. It was not till later that Donaghey brought Hilma and the child to the city, when the surgeon had returned to his practice, leaving the rest of the party still sailing in an enchanted land of northern lights, of glaciers like sleeping beauties of ice, mountain ranges of frozen rivers whose mad motion seemed to have been arrested by a spell, and waited only a magic signal to release and renew it.

CHAPTER XVI

BAUMFELDER parted the curtains of his sumptuous offices. He waved aside the black boy in buttons, who sprang forward in surprise at the surgeon's appearance in the crowded waiting-rooms where bells summoned the wealthy afflicted to his presence and, holding out a beautifully white hand to Hilma, led her and Donaghey into an inner room.

The trained nurse who officiated there, spotless, severe, shapely and official to the verge of caricature, lifted a supercilious brow, as she took the baby from Donaghey's arms, and her expressionlessly regular and experienced, unlined face wore a puzzled look as she noted the great Baumfelder's deferential and attentive air while he listened to this simply, dowdily-dressed woman and the odd, restless, bitter little Irishman who accompanied her.

"I am sure I can help you, Mrs. Donaghey," he said at last. "It is not serious. Yes, of course, you shall be made well and——"

"And what will it cost, Doctor?"

Baumfelder looked amiably at Donaghey waving aside his question. "We need not speak of that," he said graciously.

"Oh yes, we need! Hilma shan't beg and I can't

accept charity." A perverse world seemed bent upon ignoring Donaghey's craving for regularity.

"What has become of all your communistic theories, Mr. Donaghey?" demanded Baumfelder smiling.

"They've gone a-glimmering and I've got sane."

"Let me have the pleasure of treating Miss Incell's friend for the pleasure it will be to see her well again."

"No—thank you. We owe enough to Miss Incell. She's more than out of our debt; every stitch the child wears came from her. That's enough."

Baumfelder turned from him to Hilma.

"And you? Can't I prevail upon you to accept my services?" he asked.

She met his eyes with their revelation of the complex being he was, with the too significant tenderness for women, with the artistic qualities and the self-indulgent ones of his nature, and the keen glance of the surgeon piercing it all, in a childlike spirit of utter repose and docility.

"As Will says so must it be," she said simply.

"Very well. I will let Mr. Donaghey know the cost after my first visit to you."

Baumfelder stood, his hand on the door, looking after them as they went out into the hall. The

Irishman had taken the baby in his arms, showing that same quick deftness of touch that had made the inside of Hilma's house in the mountains so beautiful.

"*'Du bist die Ruh der Friede Mild'.*" The great surgeon hummed the German melody between his white teeth, and turned back to his desk. "And yet he is restless, eaten up with dissatisfaction, the husband. Ingrate!"

But Donaghey was no ingrate. Circumstances were crowding him to a determination from which he shrank, despite the self-justification he ceaselessly argued. He had been unable to find work in the city; every inlet to business, to trade was blocked. The strike had congested the market and labor held out strong, willing, desperate hands for the work it was denied. Fate seemed slowly to be cornering Donaghey, and in the very pursuit of the established, the conventional, he felt himself being forced back step by step into the last irregularity.

"There's no reason why I, who believe this strike to be all wrong, should stay here paralyzed and a pauper because of it," he groaned to Overman.

"There's the reason that every man who is a man must suffer personally rather than endanger a great principle," declared Overman.

"I've got a right to work for my wife and child," growled Donaghey doggedly.

"No you haven't, if that right conflicts with the moral rights of workmen fighting a battle against desperate odds. The man who takes up the work his fellowmen have laid down upon labor's sacrificial altar turns traitor in time of war. He deserves no quarter."

"I'll ask none," Donaghey said stubbornly.

"But Hilma and the child are provided for, Will."

"By you—not by me. How long do you think I can stand it? I tell you, man, I'll go mad if this thing goes on! Or rather, I won't go mad, I'll put an end to it."

That afternoon Overman found work for Donaghey in the printing office of the labor organ. But the virulence of the Irishman's anti-strike sentiments deepened under the influence of such an atmosphere as pervaded the place. His uncontrollable temper, slow to rouse but unheeding of consequences when it was roused, broke bonds at last there in the very sanctuary of union labor, in a violent tirade against the word "scab" which a fellow workman had used. And snarling, "Scab! Scab! It's a scar on labor's honor, that word. By God, I'll go and be a scab myself, before I'll be a coward!" he put on his coat and left the place.

Guarded by policemen, furnished on the demand of the employer's association, Donaghey drove a dray the next day. It was loaded with merchandise and was driven through the heart of town. He heard the cries of contempt and murderous hate that union labor visits upon the scab. But he reached his home at night, defiance in his heart and five dollars in his pocket.

He offered the money to Anthony. "So much off our debt to you," he said, a challenging note in his voice.

Overman looked at the gold piece a moment; then he put an arm about the Irishman's shoulders, very gently pushing closed the hand that held the money.

"I swear to you, Will, for me it seems to have blood on it!" he said.

Donaghey stood stupefied. He looked from his friend to the coin he had refused as though he expected to see the stain upon it. Then he put it in his pocket and savagely he turned upon Overman.

"It's the end then between us," he cried. "This 'blood-money' is all the money your hellish strike will let me earn. If you're too finicky to take it, I can't help it, but I can help taking anything more from you. Hilma and I'll leave to-morrow."

"No, you'd better let me leave," Overman said. "It's easier for me to move; Hilma's not well enough."

He did not attempt to reason with Donaghey; the Irishman was past reason. So they separated and Hilma, slowly recovering from a slight operation, lived utterly alone save for her child, through days of apprehension, cut off from companionship by her timidity and the novelty and strangeness of her new life, as well as by the damning fact that she was wife to a scab.

When Jessie Incell came in upon her the day after her return from Alaska, the Swedish girl felt a sudden, swift release from the tension that had held her and she fell to sobbing piteously. All the slow, dull agony of apprehension seemed to lift from her at sight of her friend's bright face, her alert, smiling eyes, her bearing of sturdy, hopeful independence.

Hilma's drank deep of the welcome presence. She took in every detail of Miss Incell's erect, confident little figure. She gave to the jaunty jacket Jessie slipped out of and she laid upon the bed, a caress that was both for itself and its wearer. She put the saucy little sailor hat aside with a glance of loving intelligence for it. Then she took Jessie by the hand and showed her her baby asleep in the next room, his tumbled fair hair damp on the white

forehead, his fine little animal body pregnant with vitality; seemingly growing with its every breath and exhaling a sane exuberance of development, like that California soil under California skies knows in springtime.

Donaghey's wife felt then her account with Miss Incell was nearly balanced.

"And Anthony has him held in his own arms," she said with soft rapture, laying the coverlet again over the child. "And he has a blessing looked upon him."

Miss Incell did not seem much impressed. "Who could help 'a blessing looking' upon a husky little new man like that?" she demanded.

"He has changed—Anthony," said Hilma.

Miss Incell's eyes lost their tenderness.

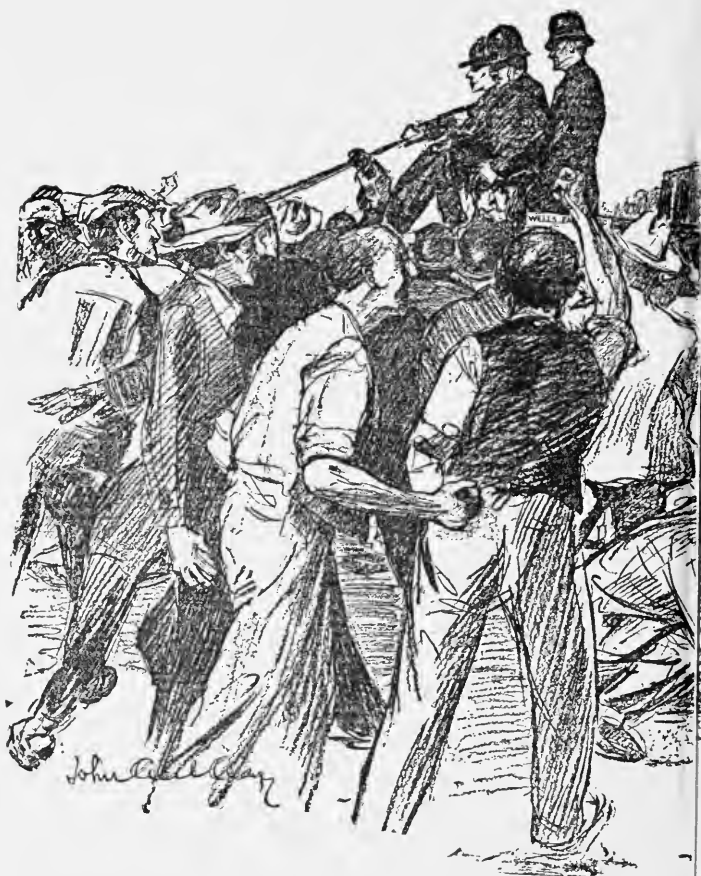
"I haven't discovered it," she said curtly following Donaghey's wife back into the living room. And then taking Hilma's hand in hers, she asked sternly, "Why has he left you alone here in this dingy place, tell me. How dared he!"

"The doctor has told you?—They quarreled, the two, and——"

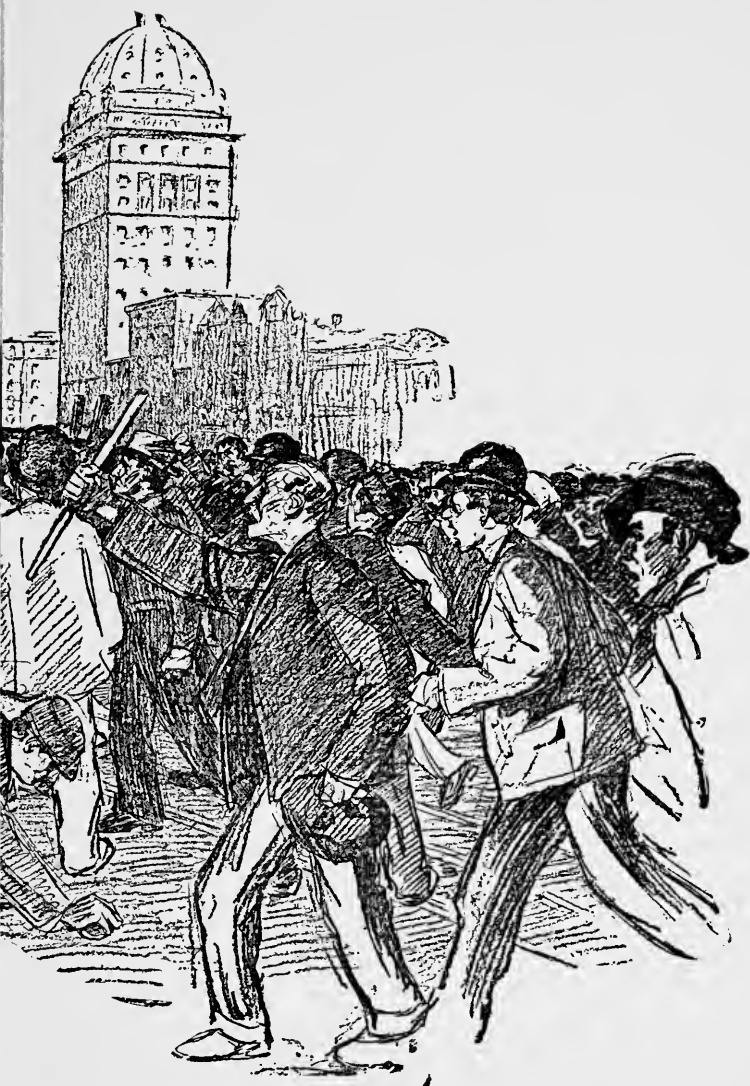
"But he had no right to his anger, the faultless Anthony Overman! . . . My poor Hilma!" she exclaimed.

She was looking out upon the dirty little street below and the dingy houses opposite, and con-



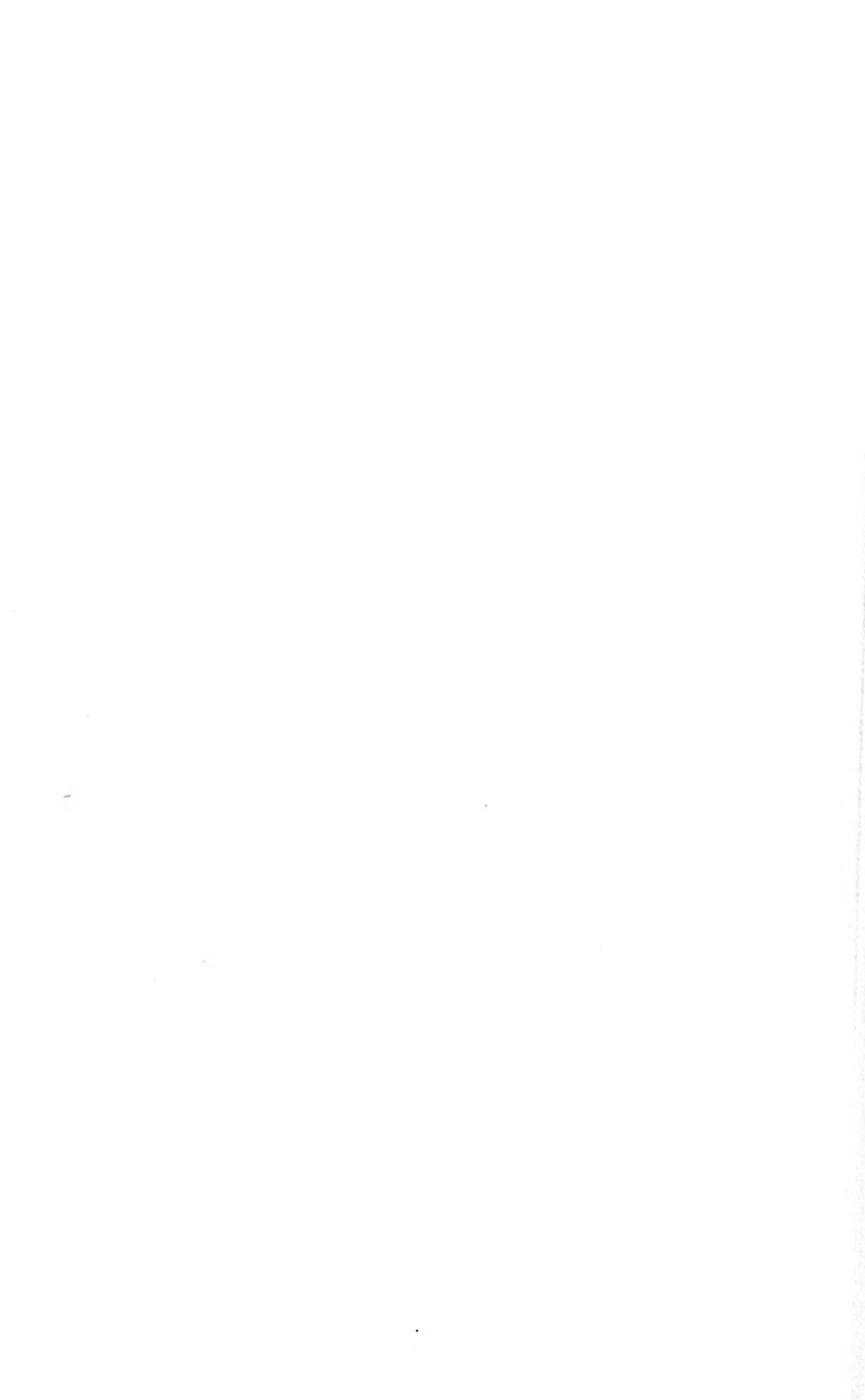


"The two policemen—one sitting beside hi
and slowly their fing



the other standing watchfully behind, drew closer
closed upon their weapons."

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trasting these with that gold and green out-dooriness which closed the view and opened the fancy in the cottage at Little Gap.

The Swedish girl looked bewildered.

"It was not Anthony," she explained shocked. "It was Will—and his temper, poor Will! It is as if he was sick—sick with anger, Will. And the more the world him hates, the more he the world hates, poor Will!"

"Bosh!" said Miss Incell cheerily. "The world doesn't hate anybody; it hasn't time."

"Oh yes, even me they hate for being his wife. The children cry names after me. The store-keeper will nothing send us. I must carry all things home with me."

"Oh, the imbeciles," Miss Incell set her teeth.

Hilma was vaguely comforted. "But Anthony ——" she began.

"Oh, he's a crank!" ejaculated Miss Incell impatiently. "Think of his leaving you to a life like this."

"But he had to go or Will would us have taken away—so angered he is. But," Hilma's voice fell, "he has been since and money he has offered me, but that would not be right—to Will."

"The ninny!" exclaimed Miss Incell quite confident that the Swedish girl would not mistake the application. "Trust Anthony Overman to take

a wrathful, wrong-headed man seriously instead of laughing at him. And he's your only visitor, Hilma?"

"Yes."

"No one else?" Miss Incell eyed her sharply.

"No one."

"Not even Doctor Baumfelder?"

"Oh, the doctor? He is not a visitor."

"No? But he comes—still—often?"

"Yes, though I fear for the bill. But he is very kind."

"Very."

Miss Incell sniffed. Hilma looked timidly at her friend; everything she said seemed more and more to anger her. Jessie caught the troubled, questioning look in those clear, soft eyes and put an arm remorsefully about Hilma's shoulders.

"It's nothing, dear," she said apologetically, "only Anthony Overman is such a fool. One would think he'd have some sense if Donaghey hasn't."

"You do not—like him more—Anthony?" A horror of astonishment was revealed in Hilma's voice.

"Like him!" She was putting on her jacket which Donaghey's wife held for her; but she had controlled her voice when she turned and pinned on her hat with a firm hand, standing before the

little mirror. "Who could like a body of crankisms, like that!" she went on more lightly. "He's nothing but a house of abstractions—no man; only a theory box!"

The words were Greek to Hilma, but the tone was unmistakeably contemptuous.

"Yet he a great editor has become," she ventured.

Miss Incell's lip curled. She had an intimate knowledge of great editors.

"And up at the cottage where we all so happy were, you said often——"

But Jessie could not listen to this.

"A lot of nonsense, no doubt," she interrupted hurriedly. "But there was one part of it that was the truth, Hilma, the unshakable, perfect truth—my fondness for you, dear. Now after I have gone home you must just keep thinking of me; of nothing else. Every time you get to worrying about Will and the strike—that you, a shepherdess from Arcady should bother about such things!—just you shift your mind to Jessie Incell. And the first thing you know the hours will be gone by and I'll be here again. I want to see your Billy-boy with his eyes open. . . . Hadn't you better change your mind, bundle him up and come home to dinner with me? Can't Will be left to himself once? At the cottage I remem-

ber many a meal that he cooked. . . . Well, to-morrow then, I'll take you away in spite of yourself and—courage Hilma! I'll see that Will gets out of this strike mess; he shall have something less dangerous to do, upon my honor as a journalist. Good-bye then."

Down in the street she waved a hand and smiled up to Hilma at the window, and Donaghey's wife turned to her work surprised that the sun was not shining into her little place, so flooded it seemed with cheery, practical, loving helpfulness. She got the supper and had her table waiting. It seemed to her it waited longer than usual, but then the baby waked and she bathed and dressed it for the night and nursed it till it fell asleep again, And she sat with it, at length, lying across her knees, waiting patiently for her husband to come that she might share her happiness with him.

Donaghey was on his way home. In his dray, guarded by the two big policemen whose pistols were carried significantly in sight, he had reached the confluence of streets where three thoroughfares empty into the main traffic river. The irregular space thus made was crowded at this hour in the evening, but with every step his horses took it became more and more blocked. Donaghey drove on slowly, carefully picking his way,

an intent frown over his eyes that had not looked clearly and happily on the world for many days. The two policemen—one sitting beside him, the other standing watchfully behind, drew closer and slowly their fingers closed upon their weapons. When Donaghey (who had become accustomed to being pilloried vocally on his homeward journey, and who sat in affected stolidity that hid, not fear, but rage) became conscious that there was more than the usual verbal menace in the murmurs that came up to him, the two officers had their pistols already cocked, their shining barrels pointing downward at the mass.

“You’re not going to shoot?” Donaghey muttered.

“Not unless they actually board us, and then two cartridges are blank anyway,” the man beside him answered.

A sudden melting in the crowd permitted Donaghey to turn his horses to the left just then, but the moment he had done so he saw what had caused it. A few paces ahead the street was torn up and was being repaved, and the strikers, strategically falling back to mislead him, were now seizing upon the broken basalt blocks and, having armed themselves, they closed in again about the wagon.

"Come down, you scab!" A bit of gravel hit Donaghey's cheek.

"Come down out o' that wagon!"

"Hurry now, or you'll never drive another dray, you coward-scab!"

Donaghey's eyes blazed. He set his teeth and urged his horses on.

"Easy—you're mad," growled the policeman beside him. "Don't provoke them."

He caught the lines out of Donaghey's hands, that had not the slightest tremor in them. He looked curiously from the rigidity of the man beside him to the mob swaying like a fluid body.

"Get out of the way there, you fellows!" he called.

His voice was big and young and jocular, and he looked down upon the white threatening upturned faces with a light of comradeship in his eye, that was very unlike the expression it had for the scab he was protecting.

"G'wan!" he growled good naturedly. "Get out, an' don't look for throuble!"

With an ostentatious relaxing of his big muscles he lifted the pistol he held that all might see it.

A short laugh came up from below; a laugh that appreciatively differentiated the man from his duty. But the mass crowded closer and

epithets and curses beat thick on Donaghey's ears. His hands closed again on the reins, but his face was utterly unmoved.

"He's no coward," whispered the officer behind to the one in front.

"More's the pity," said the other under his breath. "If he was we'd be like to get out o' this without using guns. . . . What're ye doin' there!" he exclaimed breaking off suddenly as Donaghey laid down the reins and stood up.

"I'm going down to face the cowards."

"Ye're crazy. They'll tear you to pieces."

"But I'll be doing some tearing first," the Irishman muttered.

A blind rage possessed him which clouded his eyes and made his ears sing dizzily. He had his foot on the wheel and was just about to jump when the big policeman caught him around the waist and dragged him back.

A gasp of disappointment went up from the crowd. It was such a sigh as a wild beast might give whose jaws had opened and shut again, balked.

The first stone came quickly after that. It hit Donaghey on the ankle, and he writhed and twisted in the policeman's grasp, beyond himself now or anyone else; blood-mad with rage and borne down by the consciousness—against which every

fibre of his physical being revolted—that he was doomed, and doomed to passivity.

A rattle of stones followed. All of the three on the wagon felt them and there came the quick crack from the officer's pistols in answer.

The policeman who stood in front, his smoking pistol in his hand, could see the effect of that first report. It reminded him curiously of the time when he was a child who played with motes of dust dancing in the sunshine that streamed through a knothole. A wavering splotch of humanity broke and formed again and a heavy bit of basalt, hurled with savage skill, broke the scab's arm at the wrist.

Without a moan Donaghey bent, picked up the stone as it rattled down upon the bed of the wagon and rising, hurled it back with all his might. He fell almost crushed beneath the shower of stones after this, but his missile had done execution and, if he felt at all, he experienced satisfaction.

Out on the ebbing border of the black sea of strikers the relief squad of policemen were clubbing their way into the storm centre. The cr-rack, cr-rack of the officers' pistols rang out again, when suddenly a man with his coat torn from him and the blood dripping from a wound in his head, fought his way to the wagon. In the very mouth

of the pistols pointed at him, he leaped into the dray and in a second had his arms around Donaghey.

Both the mob and the amazed policemen misunderstood his purpose. A hungry howl of satisfaction went up from the strikers. The third cartridge, the first real one, went off. The man shivered but recovering, with a quick blow, knocked the pistol that had wounded him down into the street; yet he did not relax his hold on Donaghey.

The Irishman opened his eyes. Through a bloody haze he saw the face above him.

"Anthony—man, God bless you! . . . Hilma—promise. . . . " The words rattled and died in his throat.

Overman could not speak. He felt the slow shiver that seemed to dissolve the very fibres of Donaghey's being and, raising himself on his elbow, he twisted his body till it shielded the Irishman from the rain of stones.

A howl of rage came up from below; the mob felt itself betrayed; cheated. Over the face of the officer whose bullet was lodged in Overman's shoulder, a grayish pallor came. Suddenly he understood. But at that minute the press of men immediately in front broke and the horses, shivering and maddened, plunged and broke away.

The sudden jolt of the wagon threw Overman into the street and, with a cry of satisfaction that seemed to burst like a living, exulting thing from every throat, the mob flung itself upon him.

CHAPTER XVII

“THEY twitch, they tear at it as they bite! Can’t you see them, Jessie? It is as though the fish were not satisfying their hunger but a devilish instinct to rend. It is only a crumb of bread—it cannot feel—it must not—it cannot. . . . But see, it twitches like a living thing in agony. It is sent by very reaction from one cruel, greedy mouth that tears it to another cruel, greedy mouth which cuts a bit from the reeling, bleeding thing and sends it quivering on—to be torn and rent and bitten forever and ever—and ever—and . . .”

Overman opened his eyes. He seemed to hear his own voice singing out in an agonized crescendo and diminuendo of delirium.

“What was I saying?” he asked.

Baumfelder’s fingers lifted from his wrist.

“That you could listen to Wissner’s playing forever, Mr. Overman,” he responded pleasantly.

“Yes.”

Overman’s dazed eyes wandered from the surgeon’s face to the nurse on the other side of the hospital bed. He touched the bandage on his head tentatively and looked perplexed at his hand when it dropped trembling.

"Yes, I could," he repeated slowly, and fell asleep.

A smile of victory transfigured the surgeon's heavy, dark face. He walked from the ward to the office with an elation in his every movement that explained his success—an elation that was old but ever new to him; he walked like a materialistic, skilful god and he felt like one. When he got to the office he took down the telephone receiver and in a moment he heard Jessie Incell's voice.

"Yes," he answered, "he will live—surely."

His ear caught the jarring rattle as, without an answering word, she hung up her receiver. And Baumfelder sat for a moment without moving a muscle, a smile on his full, sensuous lips.

At the other end of the line Jessie Incell, too, sat smiling. It was a weak, uncertain smile in which her eyes had no share. In them there still dwelt the misery of that waiting terror of apprehension that had almost paralyzed her when her bell had rung.

She was still sitting, her hand lingering lovingly on the receiver that had brought her such news, when Hilma in her black dress came into the room, despite her height and the slow grace of her long-limbed body she looked like a bewildered child caught up in a maelstrom of tragedy.

"He will—get well, Hilma. He will live," Jessie gasped throwing herself into the Swedish girl's arms.

And she wept as though her heart was broken instead of being eased of an intolerable fear. Hilma held her close and patted her shoulder gently. Her own eyes were full, but about her mouth the lines of patient sorrow deepened.

"A woman is such a—a limited creature," sighed Jessie at last. "The harp of her expression of emotion has indeed but a single string. If she's miserable she cries. If she's—relieved, she cries, too."

Her voice changed suddenly. Her utterance lost its vehement happiness and she sought to create a new impression; but she succeeded only in fuller self-betrayal. Hilma though was unconscious of it. Subtlety was wasted upon a nature so broadly, deeply simple as hers. And her own grief still preoccupied her.

"God is good," she said with piteous resignation.

Jessie Incell shivered. In a fleeting, cold breath of terror she realized this woman's agony and felt again how nearly she too had been widowed. The thought shamed her. At a time when her world was still shuddering from the near presence of Death's icy presence, her hurt

pride, her wounded feminine vanity seemed pitifully mean and unworthy.

When the next day she was permitted to see him, she entered Anthony's room at the hospital, chastened and with something of that grace of self-unconscious humility which breathed a benediction from the presence of poor Donaghey's widow.

Even as she opened the door she heard him say her name, though he was looking at the nurse as he spoke, and in his eerie voice there was a subconscious expression of uncertainty.

"I'm sane enough and strong enough to battle against it, Jessie," he was saying argumentatively, yet with a puzzled look in his eyes that rested upon the nurse's placid features, "but I've not got sanity and strength enough to conquer it. I know now the unreality of it, but I know as surely that in a minute or the fraction of a second I shall not know it. I shall see the fish darting at the crumb of bread and shall lose my identity again in that one helpless thing being torn to pieces by a multitude. I shall cry that they are fish yet I shall feel that they are men. I shall have the consciousness of being rent limb from limb, yet being still a crumb retaining wholeness enough to float always within reach of hungry, gloating eyes and cruel, greedy mouths. I shall feel the strain

of struggling against it, but more the terror of yielding to the fancy. And this—must go on forever and ever—and—ever—Why, Jessie!”

She had run forward with a cry, conquering her momentary repulsion for his bewildered half-sanity. She flung herself on her knees beside the bed and caught his hands in hers. And at her touch the cobwebs of delirium seemed to fall from him and, looking with almost incredulous joy into her face, he spoke her name again with such tenderness, such a warmth of yearning love as brought expression even to the nun-like face of the trained nurse. She, looking up, saw Doctor Baumfelder at the open door beckoning to her and, obeying, she left the room and the two alone.

“I have been wearying so for you, sweetheart,” he sighed.

“And I for you, Anthony.”

He lifted her hands and pressed them to his cheek, to his lips.

“The touch of them is balm,” he whispered. “I feel like some afflicted wretch whose sovereign’s hands have cured him. I’ve been tortured by a delirium, Jessie, that has become half-conscious madness. It—it——”

“We wont talk of it, dear.”

He laughed weakly, putting out his arm to draw

her to him. She nestled down in its embrace with a sigh of utter content.

"It can't come back, my darling. You are my talisman. Our love is like something supernatural—that's outside of us both and stands on the threshold of illusion assuring sanity to me. . . . My love—forgive?"

His failing voice reached her like a sigh from paradise, and the little movement of her head in reply was half assent, half denial of wrong.

As though it were an Industrial Monster requiring but a blood-sacrifice to appease it, the strike which had reached its climax the day of Donaghey's death, subsided quickly. By the end of the week propositions of compromise were being exchanged. Overman's name was mentioned as one of the labor commissioners to arrange the terms of settlement, but he had so nearly yielded up his life between the pistols of those in authority and the fists of those rebelling against it, that the men were back at work, the streets were quiet and busy and the state's commerce was thriftily seeking its old channels by the time he was permitted to sit out in the hospital garden.

Morgan came to see him here one day, with an offer from his managing editor. It was one of

those wonderful warm winter days given to San Francisco instead of the spring she has never experienced. After a week's rain the sun shone out of a sky as warmly blue as late spring brings in other climates. The world seemed in a very rapture of creation. The bay below the garden, new washed and sparkling like a pale emerald, spread gaily out and the city's streets terraced down to meet it. The peculiar delicacy and richness of California roses, coaxed by the softness of the climate to live outdoors, sent up a perfume that hot-house flowers cannot yield. The turf was of a thick, healthy, wet green, teeming with life. The hills beyond were green as summer in California cannot make them, and off to the west against the tender sky the cross on Lone Mountain was etched.

"It serves you right, of course, Overman," said Morgan taking a seat at the table besides which Anthony sat. "The fellow who interferes between capital and labor deserves what he gets;—which is what anybody gets who tries to settle a row between husband and wife. Capital's the husband, of course, with all the marital rights, with the experience, the judgment, the bigger brain and the real values at stake. He's married to Labor—a somewhat irrational being as the ladies are apt to be, but very useful, even indis-

pensable, as they too are, though emotional, quick-tempered and likely to act upon impulse. Capital's is all the risk. Labor's is all the gain—on its own capital invested, which is merely two hands, and the supply of hands will always exceed the demand. Labor owes Capital obedience, just as the good old marriage service knew what was best for both husband and wife. They fall out, of course, just as there are difficulties even in well-regulated households where the husband keeps the wife fairly under control. But, however bitter the disagreement, there is no divorce for these two; and the only thanks the outsider gets who interferes is to get his head smashed—which doesn't prevent my being glad that yours is mended again."

"Thank you. . . . Have some?" said Overman, pushing toward him a basket of fruit which, with a pile of papers and magazines stood between them. "The only exceptions I can take to all you say are first, my head was smashed by mistake, not by intention—the mob took me for my friend, poor fellow, whom I was trying to save. And second, it is Labor and not Capital that's the husband of the industrial marriage. I'm not so rigid a sexualist as yourself, so I'll not impute all the weaknesses to the wife and all the powers to the husband. Labor's is the terrible risk of life and

time and strength. What more can a man give but all that he has? If Capital's risk is really greater it is because she has stolen so much of what was Labor's as to leave him beggared. Capital's is the feminine portion—to let others work for her, to operate through others and only . . . But yours is a clever figure of speech, not a just one. As a matter of fact I believe you to be as insincere, Morgan, in your pretense of aristocratic prejudice as in your theory of wifely subjugation. Your own wife——”

“My own wife, when I get her—and I will get her—will be the hundredth woman.”

“Every man's wife is to him. Mine will be too.”

“Yours—Adonis?” Morgan leaned forward, an ironical smile on his lips. “And all the creeds of the Renunciants? I thought it was the proper Renunciant stunt to postpone matrimony till one is ideally fit to be a father. Have you suddenly become worthy to be an ancestor—purified through pain, a smashed head say, and that sort of thing?”

Overman laughed.

“I'm not saying I'm fit. I'm merely fitter than I was because I know more—about myself—and others now. As to the creed, it's about as full of errors and beauties as most, I suppose. But really, if you'll think of it, is there anything

more offensive that one man can call another than —‘Adonis’?”

“Doesn’t it occur to Adonises generally to ascribe the name to envy?” demanded Morgan.

“Invariably—when Adonis is an ass.”

“Oh—if you’re going to take it seriously. . . .”

“I’m not.”

There was a short silence. Morgan finished his orange and put out his hand for more of the fruit. The pomegranates that lay on top of the basket reminded him of Jessie Incell; he knew no one else who was fond of the fruit.

“I wonder if there’s anything so unforgivable,” Overman went on, his hands resting on the open book in his lap, “as the pretense of man in the singular to a form of living which calls for strength where most men are weak,—and perhaps weakness where men are usually strong. See how gleefully you fellows in the world hunt a clergyman down; how keen you are to scent any merely human misdemeanor on his part, which you would so readily overlook in yourselves; how joyously you give tongue and set the world of dogs to bark at his heels. And why? Because——”

“Because he has pretended to greater holiness and ought to be made to live up to every inch of his pretensions,” Morgan interrupted savagely.

"But he is human after all. He must be tempted and troubled, 'even as you and I'."

"Then let him recant. Let him step down publicly—(as he went up)—from the eminence of Phariseeism and admit that he is no better than other men—but surely you don't mean 'you or I'!"

"You insist upon being sarcastic at the expense of my former pretensions, do you? Well, take me as a case. There was no insinuation in anything I said or did of my being a perfectionist."

"Only by implication."

"Then every man who forms a theory of living and tries to live up to it says to other men, 'I am better than thou' and must therefore, when he himself discovers that he is sadly human, be accused not only of sin but hypocrisy."

"It's a good old social law that the elect should be held up to the very letter of the thing they profess," declared Morgan. "There should be no more quarter for the minister—I'm not including you among the frocked and faultless—than for the woman who defies the steel-clad law in which the sex walks secure. He is a traitor to his order; so is she. And both should suffer in the proportion that both were privileged and protected—privileges and protection accepted under false pretenses, if either renig."

"It sounds like the bitter old law of the savage religions. What hide-bound moral conservatives you men of the world are—for other people! Do you believe only in forgiveness of sinners' sins—never of those of saints?"

"For the lady who throws her bonnet over the mill and elects to go without moral headgear, I have as much charity as—as Doctor Baumfelder has, when once she has done with pretenses. For the Reverend Grant MacMillan—I suppose you are thinking of him——"

"I was wondering if I could interest you in him and get him down some day from Little Gap."

"Well, when once they are out of the church and off their moral stilts why—no, I'll admit I still have it in for them for their old hypocritical maintenance of a standard they knew, in their hearts, neither they nor anyone else can or does live up to. . . . Witness the humanizing of one Anthony Overman!"

He got to his feet as he spoke. Overman rose too. As he did so, the book that had lain on his lap fell to the ground and Morgan, with a courteous recognition of the other's semi-invalidism, bent to pick it up. As he did so he saw Jessie Incell's name written in a busy, legible round hand across the first page.

"I'll tell the Boss then that you're disposed to

accept his terms and will call to see him yourself in a few days," he said coldly, quickly withdrawing his hand from Overman's and hurrying away.

At the gate, though, he looked back. Overman, his back turned, was walking toward the hospital building. Morgan felt an impulse, of which he recognized the absurdity, to shake his fist in his direction. But he contented himself with swearing vigorously as he said to himself:

"It sounds melodramatic—which is why I'll only think it—but you shan't find things so easy as they seem to be going, Adonis. I'll put up something of a fight before I'm done. . . . You're too good, Jessie Incell, for such a perfect man, damn him! You'd better marry a sinner who can appreciate you. . . . He'll graciously deign to be human, will he? Well, I'll give him a chance before we get through. The impudence of a fellow like that to aspire to Jessie Incell! What the devil can she see in him! She might as well take the living skeleton or the bearded lady seriously as that freak!"

CHAPTER XVIII

IT WAS in his character of freak that Overman was offered an editorial position on the *Inquirer*. The paper, which was strongly demagogic, counted upon gaining through his name the clientele to which the *Workingmen's Weekly*, suspended now that the strike was over, had catered.

The *Inquirer* had always posed, more or less sincerely according to the gain or loss in sight, as the laboring man's champion. It had betrayed the laboring man very recently because of the indirect profit to be gained by so doing. But its shrewd management, having eaten its capitalistic cake, decided to regain all its old workingman's circulation by making capital of Overman's name; and by giving him a department of the editorial page for his own, the paper counted, to some extent, upon evading responsibility for his radical views.

Overman found when he was strong enough to go back into the world, that it had heard of him; that it knew his name; that, in a way, he had become a nine-days' hero for the risk he had run that decisive last day of the strike and for the near martyrdom that had been his. He also found that the *Inquirer* had been making use, in its own

sensational way, of his former connection with the paper, and had enterprisingly reprinted Miss Incell's personal narrative of her discovery of him.

For Donaghey who had died beyond the pale of regularity, a creature without caste, a victim to that very irregularity which was forced upon him because all his world had temporarily become irregular, leaving him stranded in a minority and minus that heroic uplifting principle which makes minorities martyrs—for Donaghey, resting in unquestioned regularity at last, no tears save Hilma's were shed. For Overman wounded by a policeman's bullet, the reformed and now regularized strikers had that species of extension of self adoration which men feel for the man who makes himself the type of their class, the active embodiment of their passivity, the individual expression of their composite state of feeling. And for that same Overman, half-killed by his own party in trying to protect the scab, whose very name was unknown to them yet whose protest in flesh and blood against the principle of strikes he was, the employers' association chose, in the era of superficial good-feeling that ensued, to have a special consideration; quite unlike that inspired by the style and the context in which he had written about them.

Overman, who knew not one of these kings of

capital except by name and reputation, had but one word for dishonesty, applicable alike to rich and poor. Utterly without the territory which their many, money-tentacled arms could reach, with a mind untainted by the sophistries of speculation which grow to fit conditions as rites and practices, those devotional weeds, spring up about and choke out the simple religions that flowered in human hearts—Overman was absolutely unhampered personally.

It suited the policy of the *Inquirer* just then to turn over to him a column of a great newspaper, giving him such liberty of speech as no trained and experienced journalist on the staff enjoyed. And Overman struck out boldly to preach his policy—not consciously regardless of consequences; simply ignorant of them. His was a simple theory. He believed in the possibility of applying the standards of personal honor to business life and political affairs. He revered no opinion for the sake of those who held it. And for a time he meted out the punishment of publicity to the guilty rich as well as the guilty poor, handling his subject with a clearness of vision and a determined strength that was, at least, uninfluenced by the wealth and standing of the one or the mob popularity of the other.

Overman was the first to discover, when the

workingmen were back in the toils, that the fruit of their supreme sacrifice had been wrested, quietly and secretly from them; that once more they had been betrayed into their enemy's hands. Then he exposed the whole shameless bargain, by means of which they were to be dazzled with a form, while the substance of victory had again been handed over to their employers. His exposé which held up the opposition paper to contumely, the desert of the revealed hypocrisy of the demagogue, was one of the most welcome articles the *Inquirer's* proprietor had ever read in his own paper. He called upon Overman to express his gratification. And he called again the next day to express his complete satisfaction.

"So complete, I may say," he added slowly, "that I consider anything further on the Strike Commission, Mr. Overman, quite unnecessary."

"But there'll be an investigation of course, particularly if we insist upon one," said Overman surprised. "Just another broadside from us will result in victory."

"It has, Mr. Overman, it has already."

"An investigating committee has been appointed?"

The proprietor of the *Inquirer* looked at him steadily for a moment.

"No—but we have won," he said at length,

"a victory that more nearly concerns the *Inquirer* than any outside triumph. We have driven Lenihan, proprietor of the *News*, into the fold of the Newspaper Proprietor's League at last. We've been trying for years to do just this. After your spread editorial of yesterday he threw up his hands. He is now amenable to all the rules that the rest of us have made for the common benefit. . . . And now, of course, we'll call it off."

Overman sat flicking his pencil with his fingernail. In spite of his years of thought he was very young in hope, in enthusiasm, in intolerance of dishonesty and of hypocrisy, and inexperienced in contact with frankly cynical minds.

"I want to express my appreciation again," said the gentleman, "and to repeat that the *Inquirer* owes this achievement, which is recognized by every newspaper proprietor in town, to your pen."

Overman rose and pushed back his chair.

"It's thoroughly undeserved then, Mr. Corcoran," he said slowly. "For that same pen"—he threw his pencil from him—"does good, newspaper good, by such stealth that it is itself unconscious of it. It is for this reason that I am laying it down—so far as your service is concerned. It wins by a fluke when it is aimed at something else. There's no trusting a pencil like that, nor the

fellow behind it, who is innocent enough to go to work in good faith and fool enough to resent being called off when an honest fight is at its critical point."

Mr. Corcoran stared at him genially through his glasses. It was first a stare of amusement, then amazement, and then irritation. But he controlled this irritation, for Overman's fame was still of recent date and his prominence on the *Inquirer* would make him a valuable acquisition to a rival journal.

"As you please," he said pleasantly, "but I trust you'll not quit the paper altogether. I must agree with you that unless controlled and directed by a more practical mind, one with sound business judgment, even so striking a talent as your own is not available for the conservative and delicate function of editorial expression. But your experience must have shown you that no paper in town can afford to give you freer scope than the *Inquirer*. I hope you'll remain with us and in some special capacity at the same salary—I'll discuss the matter with Mr. Larkin and Mr. Morgan—find yourself more agreeably situated."

"And I said nothing—practically consented by my silence," Overman concluded, after giving an account of the affair the next day to Miss Incell.

"And you want me to pat you on the back?"

she demanded, "and say that you're not nearly so big a crank as you once were? Well—you're not. But oh, man Anthony, there's still room for improvement. After all, the *Inquirer* belongs to Corcoran; he has a right to say what he pleases in it, through his editorial writers, and just as much right not to say what he wishes to ignore. A writer enlists under his boss's flag, but that doesn't imply that the whole campaign may be altered by the said writer, the troops turned right about and set to fighting Moors instead of Turks."

"Such a bit of a philosopher it is!" Overman said. "But what becomes of principle in it all?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I do my duty in the humble sphere to which it has pleased Mr. Corcoran to call me. I don't have to do my boss's duty, too. If I owned the *Inquirer* you should have such a debauch of truth-telling, Anthony Overman, as would endow a bit of hypocrisy with all the piquancy of novelty. And between us we'd probably make ducks and drakes of the property and have to go to work again for some other Corcoran."

He dropped his pencil and came over to her desk. Since he had left the editorial room, a desk had been placed for him in the room where three special writers worked. Labadie, the third, never

appeared till late so they had the place to themselves.

"I want the price I'm selling myself for, Jessie," he said softly. "I want it now—to-day."

Her eyelids fluttered and she braced herself in her chair.

"Well, I should say," she answered with a carefully preoccupied air as she bent over ostensibly to read what she had written, "that all the horde of Overman beneficiaries will rise up and call you blessed, if you insist. They're still too poor to pay prices, aren't they?"

He looked down upon the pretty pert poise of her head; he looked so long that she glanced up and met his eye.

"Now you know," she said with a quick blush, "you didn't do it really for me. I'm only an incidental. You did it for the Home for Dirty and Detached Boys and the Refuge for Unattractive and Uncertain Girls, the Reverend Grant Mac-Millan up at Little Gap, and the crippled seamstress down on Tehama Street, who's fallen heir to all poor Hilma's things while Hilma wears her trained nurse's rig as though it were a priestly vestment, and the baby plays at Mrs. Connor's feet and—Anthony, you mustn't! No—not here!"

She slipped away from him rosy but determined.

"It's shocking of you, Anthony," she scolded. "I'll complain to Mr. Corcoran."

"And you think you can keep putting me off like this?" he cried.

"I don't think of you—too much," she answered saucily, "now that you are well."

"You don't trust me?"

"I don't—know you, quite. Do you—yourself?"

"I know that I want you—I want you so intensely that I am conscious of no other want in the world beside."

An unholy light of triumph gleamed in her eyes; she loved every break in his voice that betrayed him.

"Oh, life's not to be considered solely as a personal matter," she said retreating before him with rebuking loftiness. "Consider, Anthony, before it is too late——"

"I'll consider nothing. Come—yield! There is nothing in the world but you and me. When—this evening?"

The shrill whistle of the tube interrupted him.

"Mr. Morgan wants t' see ye, Mr. Overman, 'bout a story," a boy's voice chanted into Overman's ear and the two heard the click of the mouthpiece.

" 'Mr. Morgan wants t' see ye, Mr. Overman

'bout a story,' " Miss Incell mimicked; a childish gayety possessed her, she was so happy.

"Tell me first when? Beloved—this evening—yes?"

He had caught her hands but she tore them from him.

"No—no, don't touch me! Don't you see," she cried shaken by emotion, "that I can't resist—that you make me weak? Oh Anthony, be merciful. I—surrender. Now—go!"

She sank down into her chair, throwing her arms on the desk and burying her face. He stood for a moment looking down upon her. He was shaken by tenderness, by triumph. His very soul lay obedient, grateful at her feet, yet his mastery of this woman was sweeter to him than he had ever dreamed passion might be. For another minute he stood silent; then he touched her hair with trembling fingers and left the room.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN Overman presented himself before Morgan he had regained his self-control, but his ears were ringing with the sweet plaint of her voice.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Morgan," he said slowly. A formality unusual in the *Inquirer* office had crystallized between these two. "I was much—occupied. And, if it's possible I'd prefer not to go out on anything to-day. I have a pressing personal matter to attend to."

Morgan's jealous eye scrutinized his face.

"But it isn't possible," he answered irritably. "Colonel Geiger is in town for the first time since the settlement of the strike. I'm convinced that with your knowledge of how that strike was settled, you're the one man that can get an interview from him that will put his party, the employers' association in a beautiful hole."

"But Corcoran told me himself he didn't want any more of that story."

"Corcoran doesn't want any more roasting of the *News*. But if Geiger will tell the story, as he knows it, the *Inquirer* must publish the news—doctored a bit to belittle Lenihan's part in it. We want the interview. Get it if you can."

He turned away mechanically; and Overman's

mind turned to his work. After all, why not? he asked himself. Nothing could make the hours pass so quickly as work. He flung himself upon a west-bound car and arriving at the crest of a hill at a half-mansion, half-chalet built of gray stone and dark, polished redwood, he sent in his card to Colonel Geiger—a peace colonel and a war millionaire. So sudden and complete had been this man's prosperity during the war with Spain, that it might have seemed as though men had been transferred by tens of thousands from Maine to California and the Philippines, merely to use the steamships of this colonel on the governor's staff and pour the nation's dollars into his capacious pockets. He bore his good-fortune jovially, most jovially; living in a haze of alcoholic exultation, in which the world appeared to revolve pleasingly about his own rotund personality. But this tendency never interfered with that keen eye for business for which he was justly famed (and which had led to his selection as Strike Commissioner by his fellow business men) for Colonel Geiger was a most systematic man who believed that there was a place for everything; the proper place for a man to permit himself to be mentally incapacitated, he conceived, was in his own home where he would be surrounded by those whose natural interest lay in safeguarding him; and not in the street

or in the office where, like a crab he was liable to be swallowed piecemeal by the rapacious plutocrats who delved, like himself, in the mud at the bottom of deep financial waters.

"The Cunnel, Sah, is—a trifle indisposed," said the portly, very black negro who came back to Overman with his card on the silver salver. "He begs you to excuse him, sah, and hopes he may have the pleasure of meeting you to-maw aft'noon—Thank ye, sah."

To-morrow afternoon! Overman laughed. He felt like a boy who laughs at all the world when playtime comes. No, to-morrow afternoon would not find him mounting Colonel Geiger's marble steps. To-morrow afternoon—but first, he would telephone the office.

He got Morgan on the 'phone and told him that Colonel Geiger would see an *Inquirer* reporter the following afternoon.

"The deuce he will!" Morgan snarled. "Every paper in town will have got an interview out of the old duffer by then."

"What are you going to do about it?" demanded Overman. "'The Cunnel, sah, is indisposed and—'"

"Oh—h! Why didn't you say so!" A chuckle sped over the wire. "There's a means of working old Geiger's indisposition for all it's worth. I

happen to know what appeals to him when he's indisposed. I'll send . . . Never mind—all right. Good-bye."

When life is too bitter or death too great or love too sweet, man goes to Nature for sympathy. No one else is wise enough, old enough, young enough to give it to him. Out on a sandy point that juts into the bay like a half-heralding, half-reverential courtier bowing toward the Golden Gate, Overman found his place and his hour. He had come out after his simple preparations were done to find the sun, which usually sets here in a smoky veil of mist that swathes its end in mystery, riding regally to death. In its ecstasy of dissolution it dyed the heavens and the earth with the gorgeous sublimity of disintegrated color. It splashed every wave with brazen gold. It painted the clouds and repainted them, and retouched and regilded and added a shade here and threw a light there, changing, shifting, with a brilliant fecundity of color design that made the heavens too great a glory to be looked upon. It transfigured the frail, absurd little pleasure house that stands out on the cliff, changing it into a fairy-castle built of marbled rainbows. It threw out generous handfuls of gold and tipped the masts of fishing smacks that bobbed in a haze of golden sea and sky. And it spent itself too upon Anthony Overman's face,

already glowing with an inward light that flooded his world.

He hardly planned as he lay there on the sandy point. What he dreamed was a series of visions in which he walked as though to strains of inspiring music—and did not walk alone. He saw the face of the girl he loved irradiated and, though all the world was painted with gold, the light in her eyes outshone all else. He saw himself speeding with her up to the mountains, to the sweet solitude of the log-cottage in the forest. He saw glorious mornings in which they two were spectators of the recreation of the world; and the pale, ascetic figure of his old self, seeming to issue from the prayer house after a vigil of fasting and supplication, came out into the dawn and in a curious miracle of sympathy accompanied them. He saw days of exquisite, simple living. He saw evenings of peace. He heard the sound of his wife's voice and her laugh in the solemn solitudes of the forest. He felt the glad comfort of her presence close beside him. He knew the unutterable delight of living with the mind and heart open to a mind and heart attuned to fullest sympathy. And he was conscious of a sense of such completion, of such full possession of powers and faculties as made him feel that he had just sprung into manhood, and that only in the degree in which they

two lived together did his individual life gather significance and strength.

The great red disk flattened on the waves seemed to become misshapen like something soluble. It bulged out on either side and in this uncouth shape it danced in globes of black upon the sky and shore and sea, when Overman's protesting eye turned away. When he looked again a line of sea crossed its flaming, softening, blurring face. The line mounted slowly, steadily, at the last speedily, and when at last the gold crescent splashed into the sea, Overman unconsciously waited for that sputtering hiss; the old war-cry with which water conquers fire.

He rose and turned his back upon it and, walking quickly as though now that the day was spent, time had suddenly become precious, he hurried to the top of the hill. So quickly the glory faded that earth and sea and clear, unclouded sky were all a somber gray. It was as though the exacting hand of the Artist had, with a single gesture, wiped out the painting that disappointed him.

Overman caught the train back to town. As it sped from curve to curve he caught himself looking back, hoping again to find that radiance of color and form. But the sky darkened quickly and the lights were twinkling in the town when he reached it. It was the sight of one of them, the great crys-

tal lantern that swung in front of Colonel Geiger's door, that suddenly concentrated Overman's thought. He looked at his watch. There were still some hours to live through. Obeying a whimsical impulse, he got off his car and made his way again up those imposing steps.

He had given his card to the man and was already seated in the beautiful entrance hall that was half-library, half conservatory, when he heard a husky, genial voice and the portieres at the lower end of the series of chambers were pushed aside.

"You're a desperately saucy girl, m' dear," the Colonel was saying in that unctuous tone begotten of a subtle double intoxication to which he was notoriously susceptible, "and a devilish clever one. You've made me ch—chatter t' you like a ch—chatter-box. And now for all I've given you, there's one thing you're going t' give me—Oh yes, y' are, m' dear, you——"

A quick little figure darted past him out into the hall and hurried toward the door. The portly Colonel, looking like a white copy of his own black servant, followed. And both stood aghast at sight of Overman. Their irresolution seemed only to stir in him a greater need for action. But what emotion underlay that action Jessie Incell had not time to realize while Colonel Geiger was

sent spinning back into the parlor from the blow Overman dealt and she, caught up almost bodily under his arm, was hurried out into the street. It came to her, though, with an intolerable sense of wrong, when he released her arm and faced her there on the corner.

"Don't you dare to speak," she cried quickly. "Don't dare to say to me what you're thinking!"

"You knew what it meant when you went there?" he demanded as though she had not spoken.

She shut her lips and walked on without answering.

"Or did that scoundrel Morgan send you without telling you?"

He walked on beside her looking down beseechingly. But she tossed her head in tune to an inward note of defiance.

"Then you knew? . . . And went purposely to that drunkard's house!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "To take advantage of his drunkenness and his weakness for women.—My God, Jessie! I'll kill Dean Morgan for this!"

"For——" she began ironically.

And then she grew white about the lips, but shut them resolutely.

"You could have left when you saw what use was being made of you. . . . But you

stayed, beguiling that wretch, letting him go so far as to put his hands upon you, luring him on as surely for your purposes as some——”

“*I got the story!*”

There was a barely audible emphasis upon the pronoun, a significance that struck Overman dumb. In the flash of her contempt he saw himself dreaming away the afternoon which this girl had used for work, such as it was; and a nauseating consciousness came to him of failure, of unfitness, of being shamed by the triumph of her sex over his; a consciousness that did not belittle his shame for her, nor the wound from her that left him stabbed, yet incredulous.

She too was incredulous—of her own cruelty. Yet she had felt the blood rushing to her head with the intimation in his voice and had known that she must stop him or shriek for mercy.

“If—if you had gotten it, I needn’t have gone there,” she said after a time. But her voice had more of appeal in it than reproach.

He did not speak and in her turn silence stung her to speech.

“Suppose the old fool did put his hand on my arm—what of it? There’s no spot left on it—on me. Suppose I did match my wit and—and womanhood against his possession of facts that shall shame and dishonor him and men like him,

hypocrites and scoundrels who have cheated the people of their birthright! Suppose so! I ran no risk; I'm a woman, not a chit without experience. And in what I did, I did more for the people you preach about than—than you did, Anthony Overman, when you failed to wrest this weapon out of the hands of their enemy. Bosh! It's the degenerate who whines about methods. It's the degenerate who longs weakly and intends kindly—and fails. It's the degenerate who is incapable of that ardor for the end that hides and atones for and blesses the means. It's degenerate not to see in the beginning all the chances one takes and to abide by one's choice. It's degenerate to enlist with faint-hearted scruples and if's and but's and perhaps's. Anthony, I tell you the laboring world—whether one works for bread or the zest of it—is still a battle-field where he deserves to be shot who falters, who refuses obedience. Success is the flag and the reward and the achievement. Nature built her world on martial law; and only the degenerate indicts her wisdom. And his indictment is her vindication. Success! Success!—Why, Anthony——” her tone, which had been almost flippant at first, had deepened into passion as she spoke; but they had reached the busy street at the foot of the hill and the sudden closing about them of the commonplace, as well as the quiet of

that still figure beside her, made her drop her voice and moderate her gait. "Tell me, what battle would be won in business, in law, in politics, in real war if strategy were discredited? And I'm a soldier. A working woman has no sex—that she's conscious of. If such creatures as Geiger have an over-consciousness of it that's because of their nastiness—not mine."

She looked up at him but, though he walked beside her, his eyes were set straight ahead and there was an expression on his face that made her almost doubt that he had heard all she said. But that he had his first word testified.

"The degenerate," he said gravely, "the kind of man you call degenerate—knows how only life may be made worth living. For he knows what sacrifices are worth while. Must these things be done in order to live?—Must one live? 'I do not see the necessity'—either. No, nor the good—nor the fitness—nor the decency of such living! One must not live; unless he live worthily. Better a thousand times that life should be sacrificed than the one thing infinitely greater—principle. Better that the degenerate should be pressed to the wall by the bustling crowd that soils its soul and bends its spirit for a little success or a great one, or a mere temporary self-glorification, than become a success-worshiper. . . . So long as success is

the measure of man's unchristianity, so long will there be what you call the degenerate. It is he, and not those who so name him, who has the keenest sense of the value of life, a sense so keen, so strong, so true that a purblind world of deadened consciences cannot even conceive of it. It is he who struggles, struggles desperately, with tooth and nail, untiringly, unconquerably for life—the life of the spirit. It is he who single-mindedly concentrates all the powers of his being upon the one point. It is he who fights for this in detail, with arms, without them, with tenderness, with savagery—and it is he who survives in the spiritual world; the world of far-sighted intellect, the world of imagination and ideality, of the pure brain and the unselfish heart, the world of the elect of the past and the future, the heaven of honor. For—for it is he who is fittest.”

He paused and stood a moment facing her. A great weakness had come upon her now and she swayed with his every word like a candle-flame upon which the wind blows.

“But not to mate with you,” he said humbly, in a voice that was soft but toneless. “Good-bye, Jessie.”

CHAPTER XX

THE stir of mystery, the odor of romance, of possibility, which not even steam and wireless telegraphy can divorce from the sailing of a ship, hung about the wharf. Overman made his way through the singing of the cranes, the snorting of donkey engines, the bustling of trucks and the heaps of barrels and boxes and sacks which cumbered the black planks, softened by wear, by the tread of horses' feet bringing in the muck from the street in their traffic from deck to dock.

"You sail in the morning?" he asked the mate.

"Yes, if I can get these damn slow fellows to move their legs."

"Where are you going?"

"New Orleans—why?"

"I want to ship with you."

"You do! As what, might I ask?"

"As anything," said Overman.

The mate looked at him curiously. He was very tall, a man nearly fifty and awkwardly built despite his height and breadth of shoulder.

"Never been to sea, I suppose?" he asked.

"No."

"Well."—The mate scratched his stubby brown

gray mustache.—“I guess you don’t want to go very bad. Better think it over and——”

“But I do want to go very bad and there’s nothing to think over.”

“You surely don’t want to do stoking; we’ve got men enough for anything else—such as they are,” he growled.

“Yes, I want to do stoking,” said Overman. “And I want to work now. Can I help load?”

“Can you help load!—you’re not a bit crazy?” asked the mate suspiciously.

Overman laughed.

“Nor running away from the police?” the mate went on.

“No. Call the officer up yonder and ask him if a fellow my height and build and complexion is wanted.”

The mate’s sharp eye took him in from head to foot.

“Young fellow,” he said slowly, “Jim Galloway—that’s me—was once captain of a good ship. He lost her—and with her he lost every hope in life—except one; the hope of becoming captain again. The day after the commission put the blame on him he went down to the docks to ask for work. He worked two lifetimes instead of one to get the thing he wanted. He’s mate now and he’ll be captain again. You needn’t tell

me, but I suppose you've lost your ship, too. It's none of my business, whatever it is. Take your chance—you've got a right to it."

Overman threw off his coat. A passion for action possessed him, for legitimate output of human energy which should have tangible results. The burn of the rope as it sped along his hands was welcome to him. The weight of the casks, the strain on his shoulders, the awakening of his muscles, the play of his strength, so long unused, had something sanitary, wholesome about it. With every pull and heave and tug and strain that complicated mesh, which civilization weaves between man and his soul, seemed to be torn into shreds. Direct contact with real things, the sense of physical aches, the simplicity of life when all it consists of is pulling and hauling, of human strength acting upon inanimate things—all this was as salt with freshening vigor to him as the breezes from the bay. In the turmoil of his emotions, it rested him exquisitely to spend his every atom of force upon material things. Here among these sweating, smudged-faced fellows, whose calloused hands were bleeding and torn, yet too work-hardened to be sensible of their wounds, Overman seemed to find himself again. It was his own self, his old self; a creature beyond conventional promises and threats, worldly rewards

and punishments. It was an intelligence as unhampered by longing for wordly advancement as an animal's. It was a body as free from taint of vice, of weakening self-indulgence as an anchorite's. It was a mind clear, if limited, and tuned to a simplicity of existence which made nothing of most things men value and everything of one they find it comfortable to ignore.

His sleep that night cut day from day with a completeness that few save children know. And his work the first day down among the furnaces left him physically so weak that he did not rightly know whether his entity consisted of more than an aching head, a blistered face and tortured back. When his old strength came back to him, work had become routine and the vessel was far out at sea. By then it seemed to Overman that it was more than miles of water and the passage of time that separated him from San Francisco. And there was in his mind a weakness that averted his attention involuntarily when he would have dwelt upon the past. It was as though he was recovering from a severe illness and, as yet instinctively, felt himself unfit to receive full consciousness.

Galloway, who had watched him curiously, called him on deck one day. The voyage had been a singularly calm and peaceful one and a

sense of being favorites of fate cheered the superstitious souls of officers and men.

"D'ye mind telling me just what's your graft?" the mate asked him. "Perhaps I could help you a bit."

Overman met his keen, kind eyes. "There are times," he said slowly, "when I hardly think I have anything so tangible and reasonable and expressible as a graft—thank you, Mr. Galloway. I did want new conditions that evening I came to you——"

"You must have wanted 'em pretty bad to take a stoker's place. It nearly killed you that first week, didn't it?"

"Yes. But I knew I was strong enough to bear that—or anything else. I have worked hard most of my life."

"And what'll you do when we get to New Orleans?"

"Go ashore and work on the levee."

"Why?"

"Just because that's the place where two hands and a big frame like mine are sure of being in demand."

"If that's the best you're counting on, you'd better ship with us again. I'll throw Knowles out when we make port and give you his job."

Overman shook his head. "No thank you. I

couldn't sleep nor eat nor breathe in Knowles's job or anybody else's."

Galloway's grizzled eyebrows met in a frown, and he shot a quick suspicious, glance at him which Overman was not expected evidently to intercept.

"No—I was honest with you, I'm not mad, Mr. Galloway. And I'll tell you what my graft is—I've just thought of a way to name it. It's a refusal to live according to cannibalistic rules in a man-eating world. I will not benefit by somebody else's misfortune. I will not go through life with my fangs bared for a gash at a weaker man's breast and my hands gory with the blood of his opportunity. I will starve before I murder his chance, before I cheat him, before I put my foot on his head in order to mount."

Galloway took off his cap and scratched his head.

"Just a crank then?" he said inoffensively.

"That's all," agreed Overman smiling.

"Religion?" asked the mate.

"No—sociology. It's the love of people that possesses me. But did it ever occur to you what a terrible indictment of man's moral status it is that anyone who refuses to take his place in the bad, blood-selfish lists, anyone whose first care is not himself should be so incomprehensible to his

neighbors that, in despair at classifying him, they put him down as a denizen of that No-Man's land where men walk about without their brains?"

"It's a pretty selfish world," Galloway said slowly. "But there's justice in it—for the strong. For the weak—well, they go down with their ships, but not in honor. And, considering it fairly, it's not a bad idea. Who'd want to be god of a weakling world?"

"I—I a thousand times rather than creator of a cruelly bestial one, where men prey on each other with their sharp wits and rend each other with their cruel tongues; where they slay with a system and devour with a custom; where each stands perpetually on guard before the murder in the other's eye and hugs and hides his weakness for fear his enemy will tear his breast open and discover it."

Galloway looked at him curiously, a slow smile on his big mouth.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"Change it—for myself, and for everybody whose manhood I can reach; be just a sort of spiritual free-lance, ready to be hired in any cause in which the wages are the kind of money that is current in my country."

"And what do you promise your converts, I'd like to know?"

"Nothing."

" 'Tis a great inducement," commented Galloway with slow irony.

"Nothing but their own self-respect," added Overman, "and the possibility of meeting their souls face to face without shuddering."

"There was a fellow once named Christ who had in a way, plagiarized your notions, Overman—innocently, of course. Great minds, you know . . . He promised life everlasting and the glory of the Father's approbation, a pull with the authorities and a reserved seat on Judgment Day, where you could see the lava spouting and the crater boiling as safely and comfortably as you can down in Hawaii. And yet—" He shrugged his clumsy, square shoulders; an expressive gesture.

But when they landed the mate offered Overman his help and sang the praises of his dear love, the sea, which had taken his strength, his hope, his youth and flung them all away; only to receive the greater devotion of his middle-age.

"At least," he said showing square, but white teeth in a rare smile that made his stern face look boyish and even lovable, "on the sea we're not cannibals while actually on the voyage. And here on the levee—take care, little Jesus, the very job ye're taking is rightly another's."

Overman answered with a gesture that took in the busy, crowded dock with its miles of waiting merchandise. There was room for all comers here, he said. Then he shook hands warmly with the mate and they parted.

It did not occur to Overman that he was working his way up the coast till he got to Charleston, where he was helping to build the roadway. He had hardly been conscious of the deep-seated restlessness that possessed him. He had stayed longest in New Orleans, for there he had picked up a deserted infant and had worked till he had enough to insure care and protection for it.

"You are not a Catholic, Monsieur," said the old French nurse who received his last payment and directions about the child. "What religion shall the baby have?"

"The only one you could consistently give her, Sister Euphrosyne," he had answered to her relief.

Galloway, who hunted him up on his second trip, taunted him.

"There are other children lying on other doorsteps. There is misery that calls out for you, Mr. Overman. Why pick and choose?" He had made inquiries in San Francisco and knew Anthony's history now.

"I don't—you know I don't, Galloway," he said with a laugh. "I merely don't ignore what

I do see, that's all. If the rest of you would do as much you'd not find near so much to guy in me. And *I* don't go on my way, calmly ignoring, with a comforting feeling of pity, with a sense of my own kind-heartedness and sensibility—as you would, Galloway, and without its costing you a cent or an hour's work."

"It's all very well," remonstrated the mate quizzically, "but how will you put by a penny for a time when you yourself can't work and the supply of Overmans'll be scarce? What'll you do in your old age?"

"My old age—my old age," repeated Anthony astonished. "I had never thought of that—I never do."

"No," grumbled Galloway, "likely not. Expect to be taken up out of the way of economies like that plagiarist I spoke to you of first trip."

Overman shivered—the memory of his delirium came back to him; though it seemed not a memory but a prophecy. Still he laughed when he spoke.

"They don't make martyrs of ordinary, humble cranks like me, Galloway. And for the old age—it's far off anyway."

It seemed farther and farther off for, in the varieties of labor that Overman spent his body, every muscle grew firmer and stronger. He was a lithe thing of iron by the time he left a farm in west

Pennsylvania and got to New York. He worked his way across the ocean then on a cattle steamer and landed on the continent with a strange, new stirring of his senses; the reawakening of estheticism that had lain hidden beneath the purposeful energy that had directed his life for these many months. But he did no more than see the top of the cathedral's spire from the docks, for the emigrants were being herded into the steerage quarters of an outgoing steamer, and a passion of pity for their unknowing terror and helplessness took possession of him.

When the ship sailed he went with it in the steerage, packed in with the rest in that floating human cattle-car where misery rots and filth festers; where the strong trample the weak, and human eyes, dumb for lack of the foreign tongue, have the accusing look that makes one turn away as from a nightmare.

And because he was successful in a measure in relieving misery, in enlightening ignorance, in righting wrong and upholding a few who would have sunk but for him, he made this his life for a time; working his way across and re-crossing in the steerage on the various steamship lines; laboring on the docks between voyages and occasionally even sparing himself the luxury of a day in Edinburgh, a night in Lucerne, a few hours

in Amsterdam's galleries and once, when a ship's doctor with whom he had crossed several times, ordered it, he had walked for a week along the Rhine.

But with the leisure to see new sights, to study strange conditions, old civilizations and the effect of religion upon them, came an awakening of thought that could find no expression in the isolated life he lived, intimately concerned as he was with strangers' most closely personal affairs. When he began to summarize his impressions on paper it was as nearly an involuntary act as mentality is capable of. Had he analyzed the impulse, he would have found as its basis the habit of seeing his thought in words which his newspaper experience had given him, lacking which now, he felt the incompleteness of the mental process without really being aware that he did.

CHAPTER XXI

“**T**O A MAN like me reared in no church, absolutely uninfluenced by creed, and with no interwoven, supernatural-sentimental memories of childhood—to such a man, who has unconsciously belittled in his rare meditations on the subject, the effect of and the place of established religions in life, the great Church here is a revelation. The church of stone and marble as well as the church of sentiment and souls and power to uplift and to torture and cast down.

“My reading did not prepare me for this. Nor could such an imagination as mine, even though fed upon the Inquisition records, realize to itself what the sight of the confessionals in this Antwerp Cathedral have brought home to me. I suppose one must have had a religious childhood, which is a sort of training school for the later assimilation of marvels, to be able to bear full knowledge of what The Church means.

“These confessionals wring my heart. I feel a living, present misery as I look on the wonderfully carved figures on the threshold of each penitential cell. That old, black-brown wood polished and almost petrified by the long pressure of centuries—how well the artist knew its fitness to embody agony. No marble figure, no writhing

slave in bronze, no sculptured man in stone is human to me; but these penitents—not yet penitent—are terribly symbolical of mental torment, of soul conflicts, of the agony of ignorance and sin that must have been endured here; and lived through, conquered sometimes, for here and there in the awful community is one whose face, whose bearing is of a peacefulness, of a sudden freeing from sin, a releasement of soul-burdens that takes a weight too from the watcher's heart.

“But it falls again and deepens till I feel penned in with the misery of mind that must have driven the spiritual children of the seventeenth century to the Church for refuge—the Church which created, but allayed, it.

“Religions are made in the infancy of nations and bear the mark of the spiritual child's crude handwork. There is an old Portuguese synagogue at the Hague where to-day the Jews worship—Indians still in emotional and esthetic capacity, praying to a bigger injun.

“Yet the imagery of the more enlightened churches—‘Washed in the blood of the Lamb’
. . . ‘There is a fountain filled with blood’
. . . Realize it, picture it! Isn't it the metaphor of barbarism, of materiality?

“It is disgust that one feels for the wielder of such weapons, but how one aches for the poor,

simple, credulous sinners who trembled at the skull-and-cross-bones religion that terrified them into amenability. Imagine how near to God—how almost God himself a Bishop in his robes of state seated on his exquisitely carved and spired throne—a cathedral within a cathedral—imagine what this lord of the Church must have typified to the peasant looking up for a dazzled moment from his beads as he knelt in the obscure distance on the marble floor.

“The man who has had a creedless childhood will always experience a certain lack in feeling what these great cathedrals mean. I am a religious barbarian looking upon the glories of Rome, saying to myself, ‘A great religion—a wonderful one—one to admire, to adore’—but I ache, I ache for the dead sorrows of centuries of Dark Ages Catholics.

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“Look from the mailed marble figures of the mighty Frankish Archbishops on their tombs of stone and bronze and iron—these greatest representatives of the Church when Catholicism was at its culminating point—look from these men of action, these warriors hardly disguised in priests’ robes to the tortured, stripped, humbled body on the Cross. And realize how far from its source an organized religion may be deflected.

“In this strange pilgrimage of mine—an unbeliever bound unbelievably for a Mecca whose sanctity he denies—something in the Church beckons yet forever eludes me. I haunt these old cathedrals trying to tear from them the mystic attraction they have for me. I have a sense of physical depression in looking at the horrible subject which this religion gave to art—the materialism of the religious conception that made artists and the world for thousands of years see beauty where there is none. The crucifixion is unbeautiful. The Christ was not an Adonis. No man whose mind is free can look with religiosity upon this naked figure. He feels the human, masculine shame the man Christ would feel could he see these churches. I would not have my body bared to the eyes of materialistic idol worshippers for all the glory that is his. And who would not rather not be Christ than the pretext for Saint Bartholomew’s, whose tocsin rang out across the street from where I am?

“Yet I envy—envy this man the victory that is his. What a tremendous thing to make the symbol of shame (imagine a gallows instead of a crucifix and the strange inversion of ideas that could associate holiness with the black cap, the rope, handcuffs and the ball and chain!) what a very miracle to make this a thing that women pray to,

that babies take reverently in their tiny, praying fingers, that old men look upon exalted when they come to die and have but one last sight of the dear familiar world they're leaving—and give it to this symbol of the malefactor's death."

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"How strange it is that I who am not a Christian cannot look without suffering on the Passion, upon which millions of the devout gaze unmoved, with placid, accustomed eyes and steady, serene lips and unshaken equanimity.

"A sympathetic shock seizes one who looks with the eye of the imagination—the fearful pain in one's side where the spear struck his; the numb, dead agony in hands and feet; the tearing at one's vitals; the maddening torture to one's brain! And yet to me they are only morgue tableaux—pictures of fleshly corruption and decay; an agony with nothing inherently lofty or soulful or religious about it. I could laugh at the poor old grandfatherly god who holds in his arms a mass of putrid flesh; kings cured by the very touch, but this helpless, old bearded Jehovah is impotent.

"I weary of the oft-repeated butchery; it sickens me. Not once but a thousand times is Christ crucified; the churches over the continent are a shambles that the materialistic mind may revel in.

"But the most terrible crucifix in the world hangs in the oldest church at Cologne. It is a bough of a tree grown Y-shaped and depending from it hangs that triangular image of corrupted and tortured flesh still in the shape of man, the head fallen on the hollow shoulder, the meagre body blood-drained and with the poor ribs showing through. Horrible!

"The Church to-day is on a chronological level with the style of art she fostered, which best expresses her. The spouting trunk of a beheaded martyr, the tongue of another held by the hangman's iron pincers and fed to a dog, the realistic slaughter of innocents—it is all materialism, gross, crude, disgusting, and with a still more significant ignoring of the immaterial attributes of super-humanity.

"And yet, one day, I heard a Capuchin monk play the Ave Maria on the great organ at Lucerne and it left me trembling. Oh, this wonderful Church that has something in it for the very ones who revile it!

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"We—myself and men whom I am like, fanatics, philosophers, dreamers, cranks—yes, we are all of these; some of us more of one sort than we'd care to admit—but we are as we are with no merit nor blame to us for being so. 'For though I

preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me.'

“Christ himself—the unread, unlearned, humble Jewish socialist, or perhaps only the embodied thought to still humbler communists whose bodies lie unknown, unrecognized in a still lower stratum of the coral island of man’s ethical growth—who—what is Christ?

“I am one of the obscure Christs. (Were he God—if indeed He could make so impotent a confession, so wasteful a delegation of force—this would not be irreverence.) And myself and men like me are the insects of the spiritual world whose ideals after death go to build up the land of beliefs upon which higher organisms may live.

“And that we are Christs is not indicative of virtue or divinity. One can no more be other than he is, nor feel otherwise than he must than the humblest wheel in an engine can refuse to turn at the bidding of the steam. We are what we are—and would more surely and terribly crucify our natures by denying them than by submitting to misapprehension or contempt.

“Christs! However false the religion that may spring from our teachings—however false the teachings themselves may prove to be. For the

everlasting truth of unselfish intent and testimony was in us and what we tried to teach.

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“But what truth? What teaching? What end?

“God knows. All man can guess is altruism.
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“This is the third time that I have seen the panorama Golgotha, a passion play in two tableaux. On one side in the light of noon-day is the march up Calvary; on the other in the dusk of evening, the crucifixion. The first a tragedy of action; the second, the peace that follows it. I see it as I write as plainly as I did in the hours I spent looking at it—the three Roman heralds heading the procession; the High Priests, massive, strong, arrogant; the Virgin—really motherly and human this time; the Magdalen a note of beauty; the clear, light sky; the Roman villas; the temple; the crowds—finely draped old oriental figures; the brooding, barren heat of the town—the low-set, straight lines of the houses, the roofs with their rugs and amphorae; the contagion of excitement and mystery in the air; the walls beyond that shut in a people killing its hope.

“It is not a painting; it is a vision of life, palpitating; life with its mystery, its cruelty. And it leads the eye on as resistlessly as though it held its place in that multitude, following up over the

low hills, till it turns to the west; to that hush of darkness and death of motion on the other side, so far, far off in the dusk that one's vision can reach the heart of the tragedy only by distinguishing the Magdalen huddled at the foot, where in an appalling stillness and shadow one takes in finally the majesty, the accusing tenderness and unendurable power of symbolism in these tall crosses—a threat and a promise—silhouetted against the dark sky . . . And then the fleeing groups below, like gusts of humanity driven before the wind.

“Mine must be a crude, emotional nature—for this quasi-mechanical work has made the Christ-legend more real to me than all the art of the continent.

“I see now—and I feel. Perhaps I shall even believe. If I had power to make clear to you the impression this has made upon me, you would understand why I fancy that this may be my farewell to the world.”

CHAPTER XXII

JESSIE INCELL sat with these sheets of paper in her hand. She had read and re-read all afternoon. It was obvious that this monody had not been written for her eye; it was evident that not till the last had Overman connected her in his mind with this record of his innermost thought. The handwriting of the address was unfamiliar, but the package had been mailed from St. Moritz, where the hermitage clings, as with talons, to the sheer side of the mountain of rock.

She touched the sheets as though they had belonged to someone who was dead, as she sat with the scattered pages lying in her lap, looking out upon a world that she did not see. Two fine lines of pain were drawn between her brows and her lips drooped in bitter curves.

When a knock came at the door she gathered the papers languidly and was standing with her back to the door when Dean Morgan entered.

"Surprised to see me?" he said. "Yes, I can see you are. But I can't work and—say you're not sorry to see me, Jessie."

"No—I'm glad!" She put out a hand to welcome him. "Your voice is full of strength and courage and—and cordiality, Dean. And I—have been listening to ghosts."

She shivered as though from physical cold. His eyes dwelt scrutinizingly upon her as he led her to a seat in the window and sat down beside her.

"For the cordiality—that's a new name for it. But I'm glad about the strength and the courage—you make me need all I've got. For I've come to put a formal question—dear little girl—and to get my answer for good and all. Wait—listen. I want to make a plea if the Court please—the plea for an average life for an average man and woman. You are—you are an average woman, thank God, Jessie—not a whit too good for human nature's daily wear and tear. I'm average minus; you're average plus. But the minus man that I am loves the plus woman that you are with his whole heart and soul and body; and has these many, many years when you wouldn't give him a chance. Come—will you listen with an open mind? Will you consider what I have to say—on this very average topic—dearest?"

He put the question with his old facetious accent, but he took her cold hands in his and held them with an earnest, hearty strength,

"I'll listen—convince me," she murmured.

He laughed triumphant and lifted her hands to his lips before he rose and stood before her.

"In the first place, may it please your Honor,"

he began, "I ask for the expunging of all records that put me to the cruel and unusual test of being compared with impossible ideals. I am just a man—not a bit better than other men, and not so sure, besides, that other men are very bad. I have strictly human standards. I have strictly human hopes. My love—oh, my love for you is all human—Jessie, darling!"

He looked down upon her curled up against the pillows. She looked very small and her eyes, as they met his and fell, had in them something appealing,

"I have none of the arrogance of the reformer. And you—you, Jessie Incell, with the steadiest head that ever graced a purely feminine pair of shoulders, the merriest girl I know, the humanest woman, the truest friend to a fellow—how did this spell for the unusual come over you!

"Come to me, little girl. Be my wife, my darling, my dear little chum. Let us live happily and naturally together—we deserve happiness; we two have worked for it. It is not our fault that others haven't. We may be sorry for them—we can't help being, out of the fullness of our own happiness—but we need not be miserable with them. That is silly and wasteful and not good political economy, besides being against the form of statues so made and . . . Oh, Jessie, Jessie,

I shall be so happy if you say yes! I'll make you forget he ever lived—he really didn't; he only dreamed, and you dreamed of a dream. I can—I know I can. I'll bring you in out of the shadow of the 'isms' into the simple sunshine of just ordinary life. Just ordinary joys we'll have, you and I, just ordinary sorrows, and I'll love you and take care of you and shield you from these last with all that's man in me. I'll not let you work and I'll not let you worry. You shall play and laugh and enjoy the good of life that's coming to you. We'll travel together and see the world—what's beautiful and wholesome and tempting in it. I'll rise on stepping stones of my lazy self to such average achievements as will make you proud of me—in just an ordinary, wifely way. We'll live like thousands of other men and women. We'll strive for what they do. We'll beat them of course—good-naturedly—for how can we help it, when you and I work together? You with your balance, your experience, your pluck and sweetness and merry winsomeness and I with—with you!" He laughed down at her and an answering smile was in her eyes.

"That arrogant reformer! It was only the best in the world that he wanted—only a woman with a man's tolerance and a manly brain—its quality is truly feminine, thank God!—and the

sweetest, most spirited, jolliest little face in the world! . . . Yes, I do—I do resent him. If he'd gone about it to earn you, I should have respected him—though I'd have felt like putting a knife in him all right. If he'd stripped for the fight and bent his every energy to making a name for himself and a place for you! Why, a girl like you, Jessie Incell, is a prize that the big fellows might enter for. . . . I'm conscious, in an average way, of my unworthiness myself. I ought to be a millionaire with a stake in the world a power among men to dare to aspire to you, but—but it's his very impudence that nerved me—that wastrel!

“Oh, take me, Jessie, and give me a chance to show what an average man can do for the woman he loves. Shall I be a millionaire and all the rest of it? Shall I go in for politics or shall I just oust old Larkin and be managing editor? I'll do it—any of it, all of it. Only don't keep me waiting any longer—I can't wait. That lean, lank Adonis has taken up too much of our time, too much of our life. I want you while I'm young, while all the world is young with us two. I want to grow gently middle-aged and later, if it's unavoidable, I want to grow old with you beside me, close to me, your heart open to me, my heart full of you, my——”

“You good fellow.”

Her simple words with their accent of gentle grateful sincerity came like the flower of promise to him, springing full-blown from the soil his words had seeded.

“ ‘Good’?—Jessie!”

He dropped on the window seat beside her taking her hands and putting an arm about her whose warm strength caught and held her.

“I’m not merely good, my lady,” he laughed, “I’m great. I’m big with happiness. Come, be generous,” he whispered seeking her lips. “The Lord knows I love a cheerful giver and she gives twice who gives quickly—but I won’t limit you on that account. You can give both ways and——”

But she withdrew from his embrace, her face rosy as though he had had his way.

“No—please, not now. You’ll go now, won’t you, like a good fellow? A—a girl doesn’t do this sort of thing lightly. No—not to-night, Dean. Isn’t a yes enough for to-night? Come to-morrow in the morning and I’ll—I’ll be more used to it. You deserve a loving wife. I promise to be—loving. But—not now, you greedy, insistent monster. Go now—now. Good-night. In the morning—yes, early. Good-night. . . . Good-night.”

She pushed him gently toward the door, he

stooping in a last merry protest to kiss the hands that sent him forth. And when the door closed behind him she turned the key swiftly and fell upon the couch, her head buried in the pillows, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

But she sat up after a time turning her wet, indignant eyes upward as upon one whose memory reproached her. Her trembling lips set themselves in a firm curve and she held her little head haughtily. She went into her bed-room and bathed her face and loosed her pretty brown hair, its soft waves framing cheeks that were flushed and eyes and lids still betraying emotion. She dressed for the night, slipping over her gown a light kimono, the femininity of whose shapeless folds fell about her, an incongruously gentle setting for limbs that paced resolutely up and down till she had quieted and conquered that unlooked-for outburst of feeling.

She sat at last by the grate fire, looking into its flames and assuring herself in a practical tone (which she could hear although no word passed her lips) that she had done a wise thing; that she was glad of it; that she had always been fond of Dean Morgan who was a Man, a real, flesh-and-blood man, a man of courage and strength and capacity. A dear fellow, too, an old, tried friend for whose love she was very, very grateful; whose

wife would be a contented, happy woman—an enviable woman—one who . . .

Despite herself she lost articulate control of her thoughts. When she had sat down, she had meant to be very calm, quite placidly happy. She had said to herself that after all, such a decision as hers in such a case did not call for extremes of passion. She was not a romantic young girl. She was a woman who had seen much of the world and knew sincerity when it challenged her. Morgan loved her; she would love him, too. She would. She would! In an average way—she smiled at the word, and her smile was tender—in the gentle, placid way women do love, taking affection for granted and meeting it, returning it amiably—this she could do, too. It was absurd, this perpetual plumbing of depths that should remain unstirred, she said plaintively. In time by simply ignoring what lay below—in time—surely in time . . .

She looked yearningly into the fire.

“It ought to be peopled for me,” she whispered bending over it, “with pictures of all that is to come. The night a woman promises—what I have, she should see herself and—and her husband who will be—together there—but I can’t! I can’t! I don’t see us two together there. I can’t even fancy—Oh, God, that other-night!”

She hid her face in her hands.

From the next room came Hilma's passionless voice, singing her boy to sleep with the tragic, old Norwegian lullaby.

Sleep, babe,
Thy tiny moments are sped in pain,
Wake not again,
Life is hard—sleep.

Sleep, child,
Already thine hours are sore with grief,
Sleep brings relief,
Life is hard—sleep.

Sleep, maid,
Thy dreamful days are but bitter sweet,
Ere noon-day's heat.
Life is hard—sleep.

Sleep wife,
Ere thou wak'st to his unfaith,
Thy love a wraith.
Life is hard—sleep.

Sleep, mother,
Before thy child has gone from thee,
Forget thy misery.
Life is hard—sleep.

Sleep, aged one,
Thou knowest this wretched world of men,
Art weary then?
Life is hard—sleep.

And beginning more softly over again—it took long to get the child to sleep that night, Hilma sang again “Sleep, babe——”

There came a sharp peremptory ring at the telephone. A quick flush flooded Jessie's face.

It was Dean Morgan's call, she was as sure as though she had heard his own positive voice.

The bell rang again before she answered it. Then she rose and went to her desk with something of that same decisive quality in her step.

"It's only myself," came Morgan's voice low over the phone with its subtle suggestion of all he might not say. "Just—good-night once more. I know you can't be asleep because—well, I know. Say good-night—let me hear your voice."

"It's good-bye, Dean," she sobbed, "it's not good-night—it's good-bye. It's impossible. Forgive me. Oh, do, do forgive me! No, no—not tomorrow—never, dear old fellow. No, nothing has happened—only something had happened long ago. Oh, pity me—No—good-bye!"



“‘Oh, pity me — No — good-bye!’”

CHAPTER XXIII

WOMEN do not often occupy editorial positions on newspapers. They marry, die or find a journalistic grave in a woman's page. But Miss Incell had had and benefited by a journalistic training that was rarely thorough, and when she came at last to a desk position she had so accustomed newspapermen to regard her as a capable one of their number that the appointment was not even jealously considered in the light of an innovation. Jessie was merely an honorable exception; a precedent which other women might adduce but which they were not likely to cause to be repeated.

Her new position gave her a certain standing in the artistic and literary community which, added to that friendly gregariousness that had always marked her relationship with her fellow reporters, made her a unique figure. She found herself an unpretentious patroness of young women reporters, who looked up to her as a feminine flag floating high on the outposts of endeavor. While to the lads who began their careers under her, falling desperately in love with her during their first week in the office, she used to say, "I'll consider all that you say, my dear boy, but remember we measure the growth and possibilities of green reporters in

this office by the length of time it takes them—not to fall in love with the city editor—but out of it.”

It became the fashion for foreigners of distinction, influenced to do unusual things in a strange environment, to be presented at Miss Incell's thoroughly Bohemian little evenings and to write back to Europe their impressions of this absurdly natural, simple, good-natured, boyish Madame de Sevigne, whom men treated as a good fellow and whom she met on precisely the same footing; and in whose salon—an informal gathering hardly recognizable under so pretentious a label—men and women, artists, actors, professional men, musicians and journalists met on a footing that was like a school's playground, so unhampered was its equality, so fearless and simple and straightforward its atmosphere, and so unaffecting of either masculine airs or feminine graces was its hostess.

Jessie Incell was a puzzle to strangers for she held a social position that only married women aspired to in their countries, and she treated the world in her personal intercourse with it as a sexless place in which men and women could have no meeting point that was not platonic. The freedom of speech she permitted, her lack of prejudice, except an intolerant scorn of affectation and a sarcastic impatience of sentimental duets in which

some mistaken visitor might choose her for a participant, and a charitable indisposition to judge others—these things were hardly comprehensible to strangers. Yet they accepted them because of the mental attitude of those familiar with her character and her situation; and concluded that the whole was a phenomenon of the West, peculiar to the curious little city on the Pacific and due to its literary and artistic isolation, as well as its comparatively small population, which was yet too large, too cosmopolitan and too Western to be wholly provincial.

In the judgment of those who had known her long Jessie Incell had developed a poise, a charity, a largeness that was clearly traceable to the dream she had dreamed and put away without bitterness.

She had a new aureole now in her landlady's eyes. Old Mrs. Connor invariably alluded to her as "The Editor," refusing to believe that any other lesser mortal in the journalistic world might wear a title so lofty as this. It was with an eye to Miss Incell's editorial capacity that Mrs. Connor revised her menu and sought to dignify her simple manner of living to correspond with her elevated office. When she found her excellent intentions frustrated she attributed her defeat to Hilma, upon whom she looked as something unhuman, a sort of travesty, in her nurse's cap and apron,

on a sister of charity which any good Catholic must resent. But she adored Hilma's baby and for the sake of that merry-tongued boy, ceaselessly climbing the stairs to her own rooms and into her sonless, man-worshipping heart, she lived on terms of neutrality with the placid Swedish woman who never so much as suspected Mrs. Connor's sentiments.

Morgan, Jessie rarely saw. He was managing editor of another paper, one whose semi-aristocratic policy made his work much more congenial than it had been. He never sought Miss Incell in her home. A bitter resentment filled him. He felt himself put aside unjustly for a shadow. His pride, his love was wounded. A self-sufficient man, lightly contemptuous of femininity, he had looked upon but one woman with reverential eyes. He remained unreconciled, unforgiving. He thought of Jessie as one who held back unfairly something that belonged of right to him; something that he might honestly have won, fully and fairly, had it not been for a fantasy that possessed her to deny him his opportunity. There was much that was masterful in the man, developing strongly as he grew older, that did not brook defeat; that regarded as insulting the denial of the thing he has asked for and had so nearly possessed; the precious thing

he had so surely counted upon once as within his very grasp.

Doctor Baumfelder was the only one who took active and whimsical exception to Miss Incell's state.

"I do not congratulate you—I deplore your promotion," he said in what Miss Incell had long ago denominated his "grandfatherly-Lothario" manner. He had brought Hilma home in his brougham from the hospital for a rest and, with Jessie beside him, was driving away from his patients and out through the park to the ocean.

"For the reason?" she demanded lightly.

"For the reason that it puts you in a position to consider your standing as a journalist established, and on a higher, more permanent basis. Which consequently makes you independent of other ways of providing for the future."

"What other ways, Doctor?"

"The old-established one of working—your husband. In spite of all women like you have done and dreamed it is still the best way for women. And being best, it is the only way."

"Grandfather Baumfelder!"

"My dear little friend," he returned attentively.

"After all the care and patience which we Bohemians have spent upon your education!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Jessie, you were a woman before you became a Bohemian. And for woman—whatever she pretend to be, whatever she delude herself into thinking she is, there is but one blessed fate. And that fate—even if it is not blessed, is yet blest in that it is the one for which preëminently she is fitted. Wait now—listen to me. I don't often preach. And it is more than a theory I wish to develop; it is the one liberty I permit myself with you—an interfering, impertinent, heartfelt desire that you should be happy. I should have tried to make you so myself," he added with a touch of the old gallantry that was not yet out of place though Baumfelder's temples were graying, "if you hadn't so distinctly given me to understand from the very beginning on what terms we two could be friends."

"It's a fib—you know it is," she fenced. "You showed by your manner how delighted you were to know one woman whom you were not compelled—by your reputation and her expectations—to make love to."

He laughed and pulling in the horses let them walk slowly through the surf; they had reached the beach.

"You shall not change the subject," he said slowly. "Let me be grandfather and preach to you this once. I truly and seriously regret when-

ever I see a woman whose vocation makes her financially independent. For I know that then she will lack one of the strongest incentives which Nature has invented and civilization perfected, to push her into a fate that is best for her. That fillip which a man's passions are to him, woman's dependence is to her—and Nature provided both with a wise idea of what is best. A happy marriage, Miss Jessie, is the best thing in the world for a woman; a not so happy one is the next best. And happy the woman who does not go disdainfully through the forest to take up at last with a crooked stick. Yet even she is happier, being a woman, than the one who will accept no stick at all. My dear friend, your success has deprived you of the impulse toward matrimony that was your birthright. Now—forgive me—won't you let philosophy take its place—temporarily?"

"One doesn't marry for philosophy's sake, Doctor," she said softly.

"One should—if there is no other 'sake' to tempt one."

"Nonsense, Doctor! A woman who's nearer thirty than twenty knows the advantages and the disadvantages of celibacy."

"But a woman of forty knows better. Forty—the tragic age when woman regrets, and motherhood, that seemed as beautifully, joyously in-

evitable as the passage of time, shuts the door of hope in her wistful face and she sees herself—suddenly; it all seems to happen like a strong, swift tragedy—cut out of the stream of human life; the waters of her individuality wasted in a desert, while the full, riotous human stream flows past her. Is such a woman as you are to be content with so limited, so cramped, so dwarfed a part of human experience, of what is humanity's only tangible taste of immortality—living in one's children? My dear little Miss Jessie, why will you not give Dean Morgan what he has a right to demand from you? Why will you not complete his life and let him fill yours full? Is the alternative you are facing worthier, wiser, nobler than what a woman like you could make of a man like him? Tell me, are you going to let him throw himself away upon a Mrs. Eveson?"

"Is it to be Mrs. Eveson?" she asked slowly. "I didn't know."

"Nor care?"

"Yes, I care. I'm fond of him—I've always liked him, but is the test of a woman's friendship for a man her readiness to step in and rescue him from the very jaws of matrimony by marrying him herself? Must I marry every man I like," she demanded merrily, "who shows symptoms of being about to contract an unfortunate marriage?"

According to that theory, I might have married you—unnecessarily, wastefully, officiously have become your wife to save you from the very fate that threatens Dean Morgan; a fate which, it turns out, you were perfectly well able to avoid for yourself.”

“It never threatened. You’re clear-sighted enough to know that. You know me pretty well. In fact, at times I resent your knowing me as well as you do. No man likes a woman to know him too well—particularly when he wants to make a partisan of that woman. . . . Which brings me to the second chapter. You won’t talk to me of yourself. Very well. But you will think of what I have said; it is scientific truth all that I have preached to you, with a very, sincerely affectionate regard behind it all. And now, will you talk to me of myself—and Hilma?”

Miss Incell looked up quickly into her companion’s face. The horses had turned back and were skimming over the wide, red roads which make this park by the ocean one of the freest and most natural in the world.

“Yes,” she said decidedly, “I’ll be glad to. Just what are your intentions, Doctor Baumfelder?”

He laughed. “What are yours?” he returned. “I said I wanted to make a partisan of you. Are you going to help me here?”

She did not answer.

"Hilma has promised at last to come to the office to take the nurse's place there. I want her next to me. I want her to get accustomed to living with me professionally so that when I shall ask her after a time to come to me, she will put the memory of that mad-headed little Irishman forever behind her and accompany my life with the music of her presence."

"She never will. Hilma's faithful."

"Oh yes, she will." Baumfelder's bearded chin set firmly. "She will be my wife for I never in all my life set my heart on a thing that I did not ultimately get. When a man like me woos a woman, Miss Jessie, it is not with any intention of accepting defeat. Half I glory in your refusal of Morgan, for the contempt I have for him in abiding by a woman's adverse decision. Do you suppose a message over the phone—he has told me, of course—would have settled such a matter between myself and the woman I want?"

"I fail to see, Don Juan Baumfelder, what other course would be open to you," she said pertly.

"A dozen others. Any but that one. And I would—I would, I swear to you, tear the woman I want—such a woman as Hilma—out of the very heart of conventional life in the most shame-

lessly unconventional manner, if I could get her in no other way. I would have her. I will have her. But that part you can leave to me. What I——”

“I won’t. I shall not permit an avowed corsair, a late-middle-aged corsair, stout and a bon-vivant, to get his opportunity. Hilma shan’t work in your office.”

“Ah yes, she shall. She has promised already. I defy you to square Hilma’s conscience with a broken promise. You’ll as soon find a false note in a Schubert song. . . . ‘*Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh*’” he sang in a clear, musical bass. “My office will be pervaded by the melody that she walks in and is, as by the perfume a vulgar woman would disseminate, until at last we shall sing together, ‘*Balde ruhest du auch*.’”

Miss Incell smiled unimpressed.

“A romantic, sentimental surgeon-pirate with a strictly common-sense business head for fees, music-mad and perversely bound to set his heart upon one of the few women who would not be delighted to marry him. Come, Doctor, be reasonable. A wealthy pirate like yourself, with your professional reputation and your social gifts——why make such a mesalliance? A Swedish widow, a trained nurse supporting her child and only slowly mastering uninverted English. Let Hilma alone, Doctor, do!”

"I can't. I won't. I coveted her the moment I saw her. I want her differently now I'm older."

"You can't have her. You don't know the quiet tenacity of passion love means—and means but once—in such elemental women's natures."

"I do. That is why I want that tenacity of passion to clothe my life as a garment. I'll not believe such a fellow as Donaghey could have evoked it.

"You'd not make her happy," she pleaded.

"I would. Why not?"

"You know why."

A short silence fell upon them. They had entered the long "pan-handle" and the touch of Baumfelder's whip just then made the horses leap forward.

"What refuge would a simple heart like hers have against unfaith in her husband?" Jessie said hurriedly. "She has none of the stock-in-trade arguments, part-physiological, part-wordly, part mock-philosophy with which women of the world salve their hurts in public. She is simple as—tragedy, poor Hilma. Would you try the old grotesque comfort on such a nature—'His heart was true to Poll?'"

"You assume——"

"Let us not speak of it—you see how impossible it is for us to discuss. But Hilma is, in a sense,

the ward of my worldly wisdom. It is not very great, but such as it is——”

“Listen, I am not admitting your assumption. I tell you I love her. But granting all that you imply, still—still she must marry me because I will have her and because—it is best for her. Yes, it is. In exactly the same sense that you would be a greater and happier woman as Morgan’s wife, she will be as mine. You women that hitch your wagons to a star, that fill your hearts with empty ideals—you are not noble but limited. Phari-saically selfish, you go through the world patting your vanity on the back and calling your cold self-repression virtue. Bah, you are mortal and human, if you will only be yourselves. You may worship a wraith, but I will prevent Hilma’s doing it. You two! Why you live like nuns adoring a religion that is dead!”

They were making their way slowly through the town. A feeling of fatigue oppressed Jessie. She had that consciousness of powerlessness with which Baumfelder’s determination and vitality re-acted upon those who opposed him.

“*‘Ich habe geliebet und gelebet,’*” Baumfelder chanted softly. “It is still the beginning and the end and all that comes between. Don’t stand in the way—no, you won’t. You will not dare to influence Hilma’s life to such an extent. The

sense of responsibility would weigh upon you and haunt you. Will you be neutral—yes? No human being has a right to be more. No finite mind can truthfully decide where happiness for another lies.”

“Except in such negative instances as are involved in preaching the gospel of matrimony at all hazards and for all comers.”

He laughed. “That, as you say, is gospel. If I could I would marry you this minute to Morgan, if for nothing else but to set before Hilma the contagion of your example. You will be neutral?”

“One must do one’s duty, Doctor.”

“Damn duty—you know I never swear. But damn duty for yourself and shun virtue for others. Be good and let us be happy. And have faith in my love for her—my reverence for her purity. Oh, was ever woman in such humor wooed to let a man woo his wife! A malediction upon you new women who handle a question with the freedom of men and the prejudices of girls!”

“Are you going to keep me waiting here at my own door while you abuse me?” she asked.

“No, I’m going to drive on past the house and out to the Presidio so that I can reason with you.”

“Don’t—” she pleaded, “I’m tired.”

“Well—come, all I ask is a little judicious neu-

trality. Shut your preposterously virtuous eyes and give me that for old friendship's sake."

"My friendship for Hilma?"

"Yes," he answered stoutly.

"You would tire the most enthusiastic fighter. I—I——"

"You yield!" he cried leaping out of the carriage and lifting her with a strong swing to the ground. "Of course you do. That's because you're a warm-hearted woman masquerading as a nun. Neutrality forever! Yes, that's all. But—congratulate me, my dear little friend."

CHAPTER XXIV

BAUMFELDER was right — Jessie Incell would think of all he had said. She did think of it long and seriously the evening of their drive. But not in the relation the Doctor had recommended. That cheery, easy way of looking at one's own affairs as though they were lightly to be borne as another's, that pleasing, amiable philosophy of contenting oneself with the next best thing, and of calmly ordering one's life as though the thing one craved had never been— Jessie Incell had passed through this stage the evening she had looked into the future and vainly tried to see herself and Morgan journeying side by side on their way through life.

But hers was not a mind to shirk consequences, nor a cowardly heart that fed on illusions. She was frank enough with herself to admit that all her old friend had preached to her was possibly true of others, might even come to be true of herself—strong as she felt herself now in her success, her late and well-developed youth, her few, well-beloved friends and the smiling band of acquaintances that made her leisure light and swiftly-passing.

Yet she knew that despite it all, with the very vision confronting her of a desolate middle-aged

self that, summoned to existence by the Doctor's words, seemed loth to quit the imaginative life she had found and pertinaciously thrust her dry, thin, limited little personality in her predecessor's path—despite it all, Jessie Incell could only accept the threat the future held; she could not evade it.

She was a busy, broad-minded woman living a free, cleanly and interesting life. She was not a dreamer and she was too practical to spend her days in useless regret. But she saw one man haloed by the depth and fulness of her love for him; and having known the joy of giving all that she had she could not comprehend how one could learn to give less.

There were times when she would have left her work and all her sophisticated femininity behind her; when she would have forfeited the esteem of every other human being, and have followed him—another and quite as single-idead an Evangeline, though her nature was neither simple nor primitive and circumstances had given her a life rarely full of experience—to the end of the world, content if only she might find him at the last and pillow his head upon her breast while he sighed out her name at parting.

And there were times when all the pride, the vanity of her nature, all her glorying sense of achievement, of attainment over difficulties before

which other women had fallen vanquished, roused in her a passion of resentment. Then she longed to have him once again in her power that she might staunch her own wounds in the pleasure of inflicting others upon him.

And all of it—her love, her pride, her suffering, her despair gave a quickening growth to a side of her nature which youthful success and lack of any tender, close relation in life had almost atrophied.

When she went up alone for a short vacation to Little Gap in the spring—a tender, chastened sort of pilgrimage disguised as a health measure—she looked back with a smile and a blush at the girl who had once come up there “on a story.”

“She was a crude, cruel girl,” she said to Grant MacMillan, who had buried his *ci-devant* clerical character, as well as his later disrepute in the long, lonely, quiet years he had lived on the verge of the forest. “Her one good trait was her lack of malice, real malice. She had a certain sort of this quality, but it was a pseudo-malice—not the least liking in the world to see people suffer, only—only the spectator’s role had been hers so long in her short life that she looked upon people as a species of flesh-and-blood marionettes performing for the sole sake of a pair of curious, unfeeling eyes and a smart, sarcastic tongue. She had a sentimental consciousness of their reality, of

course, but it was the melodramatic, sensational reality that was needed to make her story sufficiently true to her readers. She fancied herself very wise, very old, very experienced. As a matter of fact, she was appallingly young, for she had never felt. No one had ever told her how unbecoming pert cynicism is to youth. No doubt, if anyone had taken the trouble, she would have had some pert insincerity for an answer. . . . Not that it was altogether insincere, though. She was playing a part, you know, and she was true to that part. Truly—the beauty of gentleness and patience and simple, cheery faith in one's fellows was something that had not occurred to her. She had been put in the position of critic of the faults and follies of others. Her work, which had its own fascination, for she was young, was to chronicle only the results of these faults and follies. I must admit that something in her nature responded pleasurable to the role that implied a superiority; she was opinionated, she delivered snap judgments upon all the problems of life, viewing them with round, bird-like, eager eyes, which were not so much unfeeling really as non-feeling.

“In short—I have made it very long—but I see a difference now. And if I could walk up this road she learned to know so well with that girl—that poor, little, cock-sure girl who walked into

people's holy of holies or most grisly skeletoned closet with clickit.g heels and a cheerful unconsciousness of her own unhuman lack of both—I could explain it to her, if I haven't to you."

She experienced a grave sort of pleasure in Mac-Millan's society. He had become a decent member of society whose worth was unquestioned in this little mountain town. The simple, out of door life he led, the knowledge he had that no one knew either of his two widely-divergent past lives, and the coming on of steadying years had redeemed him. Jessie made him a sort of father confessor in the days she spent up in the mountains, yielding to the relief it was to say something of all that filled her thoughts.

And it was sweet to his alienation from all that the world means of the joy of battle for its prizes, to watch the full current of her life from the far-off banks of sympathy. His had been the education, the ideals of the gentleman and the scholar. But his fatal weakness had cut him out from among his fellows and condemned him to a poverty of mental existence that left him craving for association with cultured minds. Yet he was still too near the alternative to be ungrateful or unhappy, and the sight of his resignation had in it something that calmed and strengthened her.

"*'Warte nur,'*" she sang to herself in the

evening alone out in the forest, “ ‘*warte nur, balde ruhest du auch.*’ ”

It was all she remembered of the poem the Doctor loved to quote, and she chanted it over and over to herself as she walked slowly up and down the road in front of the cottage, till she came to believe the message it held. And then suddenly, all in a moment of intense, passionate feeling she knew it was a lie—that the world held for her no such barren, untempted rest as this MacMillan had found, for there before her at a turn in the road stood Anthony Overman.

He caught her up in his arms as though the old Arcadian days had come again. She was weak with emotion, as she had been that day with suffering when he had lifted her upon the old white horse and brought her down from the hill along this very road. And he carried her close pressed to his breast across the little yard and up into the house.

“Oh Anthony—Saint Anthony,” she sobbed, “save my pride. You pick me up and drop me and find me in the road again and after——”

“There is no after, sweetheart, this is the end. And pride—pride—is it?” he laughed joyously depositing her in Hilma’s low chair; “what were the temptations of the poor old saint to all that I have endured! What in all——”

"What—What made you come back?" she murmured.

"You . . . You . . . You. I was wearying, soul-wearying, hungering, thirsting—craving a maid I knew. A maid—the embodied essence of love and merriment and sweetness and all that's brave and beautiful on earth. I wanted her—her. What were visions of women to that saint—abstract flesh pictures—to the feminine soul of me that drew me—home. Oh Jessie Jessie—pride is it? I've lost it all. The pride of all the spiritual bastards of great men, the modesty of all the world of women could not have kept me longer from you."

He had changed. He was leaner even than before and he looked forty, though his figure, as he threw himself on his knees before her and put his arms about her, had that same boyish lightness and agility that had struck her the first time she saw him.

She put both hands under his chin turning his face up to hers. It was an older face, a quieter one, a more satisfied one despite its lines, and his eyes met hers frankly, contentedly for the moment she sent hers deep into them searching the soul behind it.

"What is it?" he demanded. "Don't you like it?"

"That's just it—I always did like it. It seemed so—so like something that was meant to be mine—so like something that had never been any other woman's. . . . Anthony, there's so much for us to talk over."

"And so much time to talk—all our life together—it is only one."

"But——"

"MacMillan is likely to be back any minute, you know. I saw him up in the village. I wonder if that's he now!" He rose and hurried to the window. "No, but he can't be much longer. Aren't we semi-royal, sweet, to have our own chaplain?"

"Not——"

"Oh yes, to-day—this evening—right away. You daren't keep me waiting a moment longer—after all these years."

"What would you do?" she asked a trembling smile on her lips, "run away again?"

"Yes, and carry you with me."

"Would they receive a pilgrimage à deux into the monastery, do you think?"

"About as far and for about as long as they received the pilgrimage of one," he answered. "See dear, what monasticism taught me—Practically to benefit humanity is the next step to loving and pitying it; in fact, it is really the same step, for the

one is incomplete, and so futile, without the other. And the way to benefit mankind is not to suffer for it but to work for it. The sane consequent of desiring the uplifting of mankind is to put oneself in the position to effect it, if in ever so little. To do this, and yet in the process of doing it, not make oneself unworthy of the end for which it was done—this is what one learns from himself and the monastery, Jessie. I grew nearer to you up there, and down here the same miracle that kept your love for me made you grow nearer to me. You're the exquisite complement of my shortcomings, beloved—or I'm the other side of your nature; the later, fuller half of your life. Whichever it is we'll live it together, this one life of ours. Oh, I knew, I was always sure that at the end was your love for me, sweetheart, but apart from love—or perhaps the core of it, was responsibility for you and justification of myself in your eyes; those sane, practical, wide-open eyes that looked uncomprehending on Hilma and poor Will and me that day long ago, and never realized that they, too, would grow glamored by the ideal, and come to see a queer, one-sided fellow like me through a haze that made him whole and—beloved!”

“Then all this time . . .” Her voice trembled into silence.

“All this time I've been working toward you.

Oh, you will find me practical and help me to become more so. Let me tell you. Over in the old world where misery is greatest and want most clamoring and oppression greediest, there are other renunciants—real ones; cosmopolites to whom nationality is no more a prison limiting sympathies than a foreign language is a bar to flexible tongues. There are men whose hearts are as loving as mine to the common composite brother of us all, but whose brains are big and fertile and, whose wits are keen in the cause of altruism as a money king's who is egotistically petrified into self. A few men such as these, banded together more irresistibly by the master-passion of their unselfish lives than capitalistic pirates are whose booty is better hunted in syndicates, I've come across over there in the different capitals. I went to them as a disciple; they received me as a comrade, and it is their strength that has knitted my weakness, my limitations and my only half-profitable unworldliness into the large, reasonable pattern they are slowly weaving of the world's work, its tears and its hopes. And then——”

“Work—tears—and hopes,” she commented softly. “It's been just this and for so long. Will it ever be more, Anthony?”

“Will it! Listen. The proof that we're not mere dreamers lies in the fact that men who have

fortunes to give as well as faith are backing our press and our purpose. When you know Audifred, you'll understand. Old Audiffred, 'Father of the Future' a Russian poet called him; his mother was Russian, you know. He's the founder of that great Catholic union of the discontented, that broad new church of sociology in which reformers of every variety and shade of idealism are banded together—at least temporarily and as a war measure—against the common enemy, conservatism. In London we've been preaching, in print, to the Gentiles, he and I. But he goes to St. Petersburg to take the place of one of us who was killed in a riot, as soon as I—as we get back. Come! Help me there—will you, comrade? We'll get the paper out together, sweetheart."—His tone had changed; his heart was overflowing and earnestness in him to-day was but for a moment.—"Will you be my managing editor, Jessie Incell?" he demanded joyously.

"But Anthony," she was smiling up at him, "'this is so sudden'. There's the celibacy of the Reformer to be considered—the new priesthood I've heard you talk about, un-uniformed, ungendered, unlimited; free as priests are from the chains of selfish care for family or personal advancement; the Order of Renunciants, say, but spiritually superior to the monkish brotherhoods

in that it offers an even greater appeal to the martyr in man, holding out, as it does, no reward in this world or the next except only that altruistic—”

“Yes, yes, Miss Incell.” He caught her fingers to his lips. “We’ll consider all that, young lady—after we are married.”

“You are frivolous, Mr. Overman.”

“You are impertinent, Miss Incell, and as you’re not yet my wife you positively must observe the proprieties for a few minutes longer and not hector a man who is literally daft with happiness.”

“Do you fancy, Anthony Overman,” she demanded, “that I’m going to give up my prized city editorship for a partnership in a freak weekly?”

“Exactly. Just as you’re going to give up your independence for a partnership in a freak. See—love—I have no ambition, no desire to found a religion nor to establish a system. I am not of the proselytizing kind but I must live the life that seems best to me. If I fail as a pamphleteer, a sort of bookish labor leader, I shall succeed as a farm hand or a teamster. In the expenditure of his own physical strength a man may keep honest—and keep wife and babies too. Of what consequences can it be that I’m this or that during the course of my life? That I be and be myself, my limited, honest, single self—this

alone is vital. Whether I possess two neckties instead of one and have three meals rather than two is unimportant. But you. . . ." Again he was on his knees before her, as though praying her forgiveness for all his love required of her.

"If one can," she said softly, "two must."

He put her hands to his lips. "I know," he said, "that to my wife superfluity would seem like stealing what another woman lacked. And my child—even if she were yours—should all but suffer that another's might not want. . . . Ought I to let you do it? That is what has occupied my mind every moment I could spare from blissful anticipation on the voyage out. Ought I——"

"We'll consider all that," she parodied softly, "after we are married. . . . I wonder, Anthony," she added merrily, "if we haven't discovered a new use, the real one, for the new woman—to be the practical, the working member of the family, whose head is a recusant celibate, who owes himself to a bigger family?"

"A pretty figure your head of the family cuts!" he cried with an appreciative chuckle; and then more seriously, "of course you will be a working member; not even your husband, Jessie, could be arrogant enough to forbid your writing to say the thing you feel—but not to market your talent, nor to deny the man who loves you the privilege

of working for you. No—no, love for you has taught me more than that. It is Christlike, not to suffer material martyrdom for the world's betterment, but to be possessed by thought of it; to work and struggle and hope everlastingly for it. And if one should die—caught perhaps like a living wedge between the upper and the lower stones—why then, to die knowing that others as humble and obscure and patient and strong will go on working and struggling and hoping . . . you're not cold, sweetheart?"

She shook her head. In that quick shiver, the revolt of her flesh, she seemed for the briefest space of time—so fleeting that she could only recognize it as something that had been and was no longer except as a memory—she seemed to see his old delirium realized: a myriad of hungry cold eyes and cruel, open mouths, and he alone, buffeted, torn, rent piecemeal, swaying the very tide of this school of destroying creatures by the tenacious life that clung to what was left of him and their desire to harm that remnant; to silence it, to obliterate it.

"Jessie—what is it?" he asked.

She did not answer. She had been holding herself from him, though all her soul was melting within her, but suddenly she drew his head down

till it rested on her breast, and folded her arms close about him.

Her Calvary had begun—the spiritual one that even he, with his naïve and inexperienced recognition of the material sacrifices she must make, had not an inkling of. Her face shone as he looked up bewildered, worshipful, overwhelmed by the maternal tenderness that made her divine, and the exquisite yielding grace that left her all human.

THE END



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